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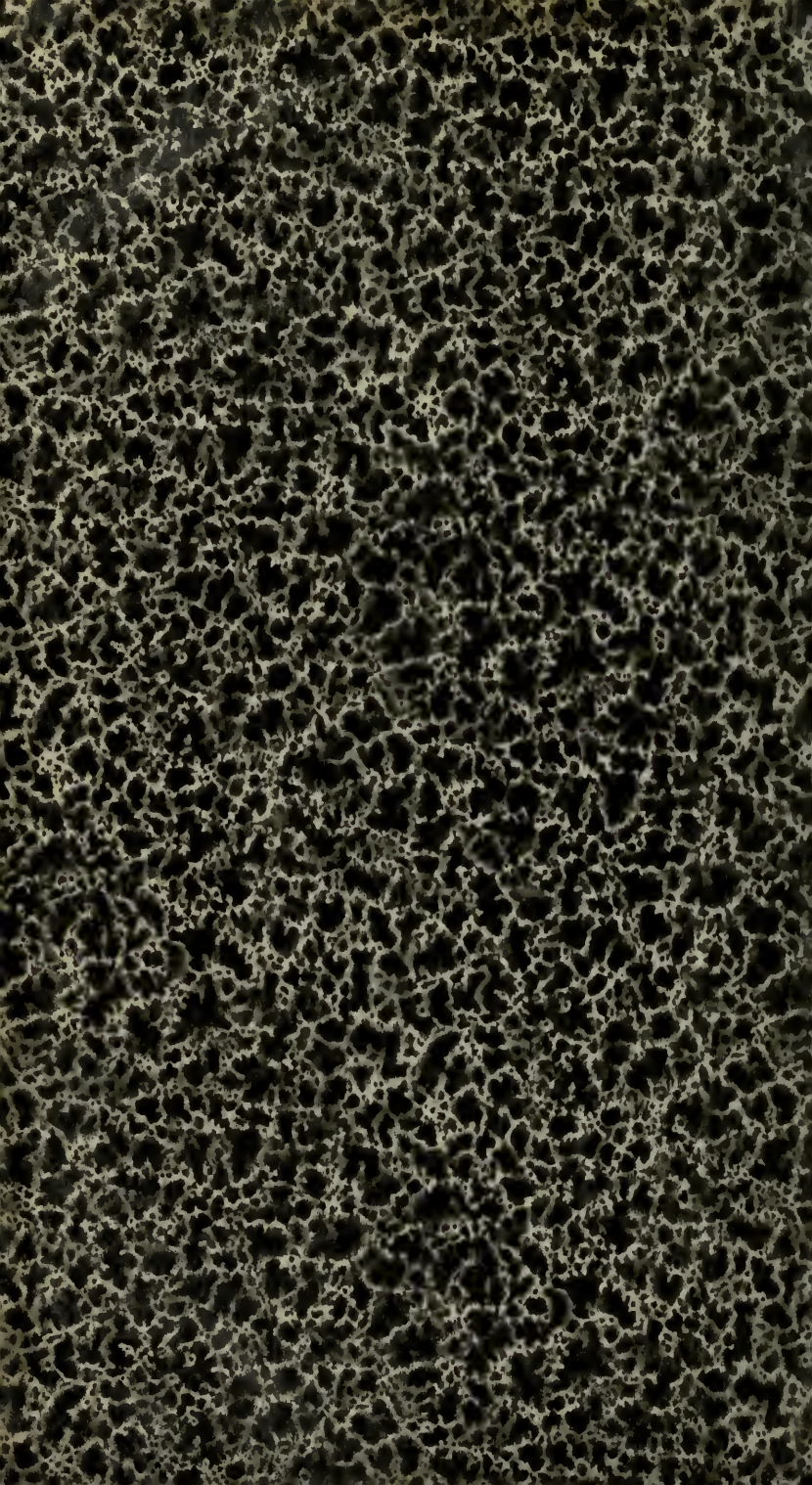

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DIBDIN'S

HISTORY

OF THE

STAGE.

A

COMPLETE HISTORY

OF THE ENGLISH

STAGE.

WRITTEN BY

CHARLES

Mr. DIBDIN.

THE PLAYERS CANNOT KEEP COUNSEL; THEY'LL TELL ALL.

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THE

STAGE.

BOOK V.

FROM THE BIRTH OF SHAKESPEAR TO THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH.

CHAP. I.

STATE OF THE STAGE THROUGHOUT EUROPE AT THE BIRTH OF SHAKESPEAR.

THERE cannot be a clearer truth than that the ſtage knew nothing of ſuperior merit, in tragedy, from EURIPIDES, and, in comedy, from MENANDER, till SHAKESPEAR. ROME imitated but did not invent, ITALY faintly copied the Romans imitations, SPAIN ſketched but could not paint, and FRANCE traced but could not draw. ENGLAND, continually fluctuating under the influence of various fortunes, as cuſtoms, manners, and circumſtances prevailed, adopted the ſtyle of other coun-

tries, and added to theirs no mean degree of native genius; but the efforts were merely THESPIAN and required an ÆSCHYLUS to perfect them.

At the birth of SHAKESPEAR, ITALY had fairly ſtruggled with ENGLAND for pre-eminence in the dramatic art for nearly fifty years; and it cannot be denied that the oppoſition was very formidable as to talents; for, during the life of LEO the tenth, which ſome of the critics have diſtinguiſhed by the pompous title of the Italian Auguſtan Age, led on by the prelate TRISSINO, and the cardinal BIBIENA, almoſt the whole of that groop of authors who were patronized by LAURENCE of MEDICIS, joined their united labours againſt BUCKHURST, STILL, and other authors who followed HEYWOOD; and who, by their ingenious and meritorious labours gave the Engliſh theatre the firſt lift towards regularity.

The reader by this ſtatement will at firſt ſight unequivocally decide in favour of ITALY; for when we reflect on the extraordinary merit of the great TASSO, whoſe *Rinaldo* has been the admiration, and his *Aminta* the delight of the critics; whoſe *Gieruſalemme Liberata* has been pronounced by many writers of taſte to be the completeſt epic poem that ever graced literature; and who, as a philoſopher, an orator, a logician, a critic, and a poet

has merited and obtained the warmeſt praiſe from the ſobereſt and beſt informed judges.

When we reflect on the genius and fire of the wonderful ARIOSTO, whoſe *Orlando Furioſo* alone has raiſed to him a monument of fame on which every admirer of luxuriant fancy and extraordinary ſtrength of mind have, in their warm and ſpontaneous admiration, added an ornamental laurel; in ſhort, when we conſider that theſe and various other eminent authors, whoſe abilities were indiſputably competent to carry the dramatic art into complete perfection, even at that period were not only the admiration of EUROPE, but candidates for dramatic fame, it ſhould appear even abſurd to put the Engliſh ſtage in competition with the Italian.

Nothing, however, can be truer than that, upon a compariſon, the Italian drama ſunk to annihilation by the ſide of the Engliſh; for, whether theſe great authors wrote for the ſtage merely to gratify an eccentric propenſity, though it is extremely difficult to conceive how a writer of great genius can feel indifferently while employed ſo eligibly, or whether they wrote extravagantly, ridiculouſly, and abſurdly, to gratify an extravagant, a ridiculous, and an abſurd taſte; it is unequivocally certain that the Italian theatre conſiſted of nothing but the groſſeſt

buffoonery, and ſunk into gradual contempt, while the Engliſh theatre began at that time to grow refined, and very ſoon gave viſible ſigns of its attaining that perfection of which it was capable, and to which it was regularly haſtening.

One great reaſon for the decline of the Italian theatre was its ſhocking impiety; for it never admitted of merely profane ſubjects, except in operas, which certainly are the only ſpecies of dramatic amuſement in that country worthy attention; and even theſe were by no means perfect in their nature till early in the preſent century, when they found a kind of SHAKESPEAR in METASTASIO.

As to SPAIN, the theatre never, even to this moment, boaſted any thing like regularity; ſpight of the aſtoniſhingly fertile genius manifeſted in the multitudinous productions of the moſt celebrated authors of that country. In SPAIN, as in ITALY, this may be accounted for by inſtancing the horrid impiety introduced into their *Autos Sacramentales* *,

* In one of theſe ſtrange pieces the audience are treated with the proſpect of a church on fire. A knight is preſently diſcovered, who, full of devotion, ruſhes into the flames, and at length, having reſcued the hoſt from the conflagration, which ought, by the bye, to be invulnerable, returns with it ſafe and ſound in his hand; upon which the reſt of the actors accompany him in a fandango.

which in its place I have already given ſome account of.

Small pieces, however, called *Entremeſſes*, or *Jornados*, evidently the ſirventes and tenſons of PROVENCE, and the ancient interludes of ENGLAND, were performed by a few actors, and appear to have been more like regular farces than thoſe exhibited in any other country at ſo early a period. Theſe, nevertheleſs, were ſoon on the decline, and when they were attempted again at the time of CALDERON, they were the moſt wretched traſh that can be imagined.

Theſe trifles, however, ſerved for the ground work of a better ſort of performances; for much about the time of HEYWOOD, they grew into ſomething more conſiderable, till LOPEZ de RUEDA, and NAVARA, ſhortly after the birth of SHAKESPEAR, began to ſhape them into acts and give them a preciſe length. But theſe, though they were followed by CERVANTES, whoſe *Don Quixotte* has immortalized him, and LOPEZ de VECA with his fifteen hundred plays, both of whom were cotemporary with SHAKESPEAR, never were able, even if we add to theirs the labours of CALDERON, SOLIS, SALAZAR, MOLINA, and many others to

bring the Spaniſh ſtage to any thing better than the reſemblance of a crouded garden, overrun with weeds and interſperſed here and there with flowers of rare and peculiar beauty.

The German theatre, not as I have mixed it before with the Dutch, but properly that theatre eſtabliſhed in the principal cities of the empire, boaſts a very early origin, a truth which may ſerve to ſtrengthen thoſe conjectures which have been ventured concerning the antiquity of the Engliſh ſtage.

Ancient GERMANY had its bards, doubtleſs the Druids, who compoſed and ſung in honour of their heroes; and theſe are to be traced from a very early period till CHARLEMAGNE. They then began to exerciſe their profeſſion more decidedly, and were called *Maſter-Langer*, or Maſter-Singers. Theſe were protected by various monarchs; and, in particular, received great encouragement from OTHO the Great, and MAXIMILIAN the Firſt.

In conſequence of this diſtinguiſhed countenance, they grew more and more celebrated; and preſently MENTZ, STRASBOURG, NUREMBOURG, AUGSBOURG, and other cities boaſted their different ſocieties of maſter-ſingers, who attended at tournaments, public meetings, and other ſolemn ceremo-

nies. Not long ago the ſociety of STRASBOURG was in exiſtence and enjoyed certain revenues, eſtabliſhed many ages in favour of that company, which was compoſed of tradeſmen, ſuch as taylors, ſhoemakers, millers, &c.

Thus in theſe ſocieties of maſter-ſingers we have, not only, in the cleareſt manner, the troubadours and trouverres of PROVENCE; but in the ſociety of STRASBOURG we have the eſtabliſhment of the minſtrels of CHESTER. We find nothing, however, very celebrated in their productions, nor, till about the middle of the ſixteenth century, worth notice; at that time one HAANSSAHCS, who had by no means a deſpicable genius, wrote ſome dramatic pieces in which he performed himſelf; but they are, like the pieces of other countries, taken from ſacred hiſtory, and, therefore, cannot rank as repreſentations of common manners.

The German theatre, however, was not alſo without pieces on profane ſubjects, and the authors of theſe, joined at length by HAANSSACHS, like the Children of Sans Souci in FRANCE, and the interluders in ENGLAND, began to prepare the theatre for the reception of regular tragedies and comedies.

This event, however, did not take place ſo ſoon

as in ENGLAND, or in FRANCE; for the German regular theatre owes its origin to the Dutch, and the reader will remember that they had no theatre themſelves till 1584. In the year 1626, a company of Dutch players went to HAMBOURG, and from that moment the German theatre altered its manner. The maſter-ſingers were ſoon routed, a regular company of German actors turned them into contempt and ridicule, from this company ſprung ſeveral others; and, having the example of ENGLAND, and by this time FRANCE before them, their poets wrote regular tragedies and comedies in tolerably correct verſe.

The German tragedies and comedies, however, even to this hour, are clogged with the heavineſs and gloom of the Dutch, of which they were originally imitations. Horrible noiſes, bloody ſwords, ſpectres, flaming torches, magic hands, tombs, dungeons, racks, and every other ſubject to excite terror, pervade their tragedies, one would think to divert the auditor from either ſleeping or venting his indignation at their intolerable dullneſs.

Thus the only nation that held out the ſhadow of a pretenſion to dramatic fame, even up to the time when SHAKESPEAR produced his firſt play, was FRANCE. There, indeed, appeared a dawn of

ſomething like regularity, but it was cold, tame, and obſcure; being a Greek and Roman mixture improved by ingredients taken from the Engliſh, who had been at the ſource before them.

Lazare Baif, and Jodelle, were the only authors of any conſideration who wrote before Shakespear; Garnier being his ſole rival during the firſt half of his career, and Hardy during the laſt, for the great Corneille did not bring out a ſingle play till nine years after the death of our immortal poet, by which time the united labours of Shakespear, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Randolph, and the other authors of that time comprizing a maſs of dramatic excellence, ſuch as no age nor country has ever produced, paſſed in review before Engliſh ſpectators.

What then ſhall we ſay of the French, who in the ſame breath boaſt of having taught England the dramatic art, and call Corneille the father of the ſtage and ſucceſſor of Æschylus, who in point of years might have been Shakespear's grandſon.

CHAP. II.

SHAKESPEAR.

GREAT and extraordinary objects naturally attract univerſal attention; unfortunately, however, human nature is compoſed of ſuch various and complicate materials, that it is extremely difficult in any caſe to lift this attention into admiration. The ſun that cheers and invigorates us, is a perpetual object of reproach. We feign to ſink under thoſe very rays that diſpel the miſts of contagion, that ſweeten the provender for our cattle, that ripen the fruits which pamper our luxury, and that whiten the corn which compoſes our daily bread. We overlook the beauty, the majeſty, the ſplendor which ſavages, more faithful to nature, and more ignorant of refinement, make their ſubject of adoration; which to enjoy coſt us nothing but the trouble of opening our eyes, and the admiſſion of a little heart-felt gratitude. All theſe incomparable advantages, though eſſentially material to our very exiſtence, we take to ourſelves as

carelesly and indifferently as any other common benefit of nature, without a remark, without thanks, without emotion, while we rack invention to devise a thousand expensive operations to discover spots which in the scale of the universe are perfectly immaterial; and which, but for this restless and insatiable curiosity, would for ever have been hidden from our observation.

Shakespear whose writings are the offspring of an intuition that mocks description, that shames the schools, and that ascertains sublimity; whose knowledge of human nature was profound, penetrating and infallible; whose morality and philosophy confirm all that was good and wise in the ancients; whose words are in our mouths, and their irresistable influence in our hearts; whose eulogium may be felt but cannot be expressed, and whose own pen alone was equal to the composition of his epitaph: this Shakespear in the mouths of his fellow creatures is more known for a few inconsiderable blemishes, sprung from redundant fancy and indispensible conformity, than for innumerable beauties, delightful as truth, and commanding as inspiration.

Look at the various authors who by way of compliment to their own sagacity have deigned so far

to honour biography and literature, as to point out all the blemiſhes, both as a man and as a writer, of him whoſe virtue and whoſe merit were either above their comprehenſion, or elſe their tingling envy would not allow them to praiſe. Do we hear from them a word of his poliſhed manners that made up the delight of the court of ELIZABETH; that laughed EUPHUISM from the circle, and that endeared him to the friends of lord SOUTHAMPTON, and various other patrons? Not a ſyllable. They juſt allow that he was a good kind of man, well intentioned, but they never fail, by way of a drawback, to tell you that he was a bungler at wool combing, that he was a notorious deer ſtealer, and that he turned out a very bad actor.

Have we any author who has had the fair diſintereſtedneſs, the noble candour, to indulge himſelf and gratify the world by any excluſive work that has inſtanced the various ways in which SHAKESPEAR ſo greatly commanded all the paſſions of the ſoul; in which, with a portraiture full of imagination and faithful as nature, he drew ambition, jealouſy, tenderneſs, piety, villainy, raſhneſs, credulity, licentiouſneſs, and a hundred others with all their ſhades and gradations? Not one. We have, however, a little myriad of critics and hyper-critics who have done his memory the credit to render his works pro-

fitable to themſelves, by making holes as faſt as tinkers in his reputation which, they fancy and endeavour to perſuade the world they have adroitly mended by patching them up with droſs of their own. Well did he ſay that men's perfections are written in ſand their faults in marble.

In my province, I do not conſider, if I were ever ſo inclined, that I have a right to examine the private character of any man, farther than as it may have influenced his public conduct; nor even then, unleſs it ſhould relate to his connection with the drama. If, by deduction, I can ſhew that the world has been impoſed on by a falſe character given in favour of any man's works through patronage procured by adulation, meanneſs, and the fawning arts of a ſycophant, it is very fair to place the public and private ſentiments of that man by the ſide of each other, and to appeal to the world, be this or any other the deſcription of his mental blemiſhes, whether, by that criterion, they have purchaſed gold or been impoſed on by tinſel.

If, on the contrary, I can produce any inſtances where meekneſs and modeſty have been borne down by rancour and envy, it will be my duty to dwell upon the virtues of him who may have had the pub-

lic misfortune and the private happineſs to poſſeſs thoſe qualities; nor can I lay a claim to impartiality, the forwardeſt requiſite of a hiſtorian, if I neglect in ſuch caſes to deduce, from the heart of the man, the merit of the poet.

SHAKESPEAR's genius was ſo brilliant, his knowledge ſo wide and univerſal, his conception ſo true, and his ſentiments ſo godlike, that to meditate his character is to ſuppoſe perfection. Yes, ſay the cavillers, but his writings are full of faults; and how, as a private man, will he be able to ſtand or fall upon a compariſon with them. Thus quaintneſs, in complaiſance to the time at which he wrote, temporary ſatire then, perhaps, excellent, now obſolete, and other venial inaccuracies, for it is extremely difficult to call them errors, which we ought not to condemn, or, if we ought, do we eaſily know how, are quoted to deface his monument of marble, and tortured into as many ſhapes as envy has ſnakes, to ornament a ſandy heap miſtaken by the ignorant for the monument of his commentators.

But as I mean to allot a chapter to an examination of thoſe gentlemen, who would have found it more to their honour to have excelled SHAKESPEAR by the beauty of their own writings, than to have expoſed their ignorance in cavilling at his; who

have ſet about to filtrate air, to elucidate light, and every one of them by a different and conſtantly an impracticable proceſs; who are like gardeners that cut ſhrubbery into the forms of birds, pyramids, vaſes, and other unnatural objects, and call all thoſe fools who love to ſee nature in her real form, I ſhall at preſent content myſelf with taking firſt a general, and afterwards a particular view of the writings of SHAKESPEAR, not like a lounger in the boxes who criticiſes upon faſhions, nor an Ariſtarchus in the pit who ſtretches one fault to hide a thouſand perfections, but a ſpectator in the two ſhilling gallery, who goes to the play to be pleaſed*.

* I know that in this aſſertion I have a right to anticipate a great deal of ridicule. It is a compliment, however, of which I am rather covetous. I have heard it frequently argued that education goes for ſomething and I ſhall have SHAKESPEAR's own remark turned againſt me, "that the applauſe of one of the judicious outweighs "a whole theatre of others" Certainly I am a great advocate for the advantages of education, though real genius requires but little, and in perverſe minds, naturally ſterile, education generally precludes candour. But education is leſs neceſſary in theatrical criticiſm than in any other. PARTIDGE's thinking BRANSBY the beſt actor and giving no merit to GARRICK, becauſe he was frightened at the ghoſt exactly as he ſhould have been had a ghoſt appeared to him, is an indelible teſt of this. The obſervation was written by a conſummate judge of nature, and who, therefore, admired SHAKESPEAR and GARRICK. Education may aſcertain the purity of diction, may pry into conſtruction, may find out any violation of the unities, and judge of a poet's blank verſe by the number of his dactyls and his ſpondees; it has, however, very little of the heart, and will be more

The writings of SHAKESPEAR take in ſo large and ſo wonderful an extent of compaſs, that, while we acknowledge that he wrote better, we are obliged to add that he wrote more than any other dramatic writer. One voluminous author writes tragedies for which he is deſervedly celebrated, that after all contain only the repreſentations of a few paſſions placed in different points of view; another, equally voluminous, writes comedies, with the ſame juſt right to celebration, in which a few follies and abſurdities are properly ridiculed; SHAKESPEAR goes infinitely beyond all this. He takes the whole round of the paſſions, bends them into every form in which they ought deſervedly to be exhibited, expoſes them to contempt, holds them up to ridicule, commands for them admiration, conciliates pity, excites terror, and in ſhort diſplays, in his

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likely to ſuppreſs than to ſtimulate tears and ſmiles. A play is, or ought to be, a repreſentation of nature, of which every ſpectator is, as far as his underſtanding permits, a judge. Judgement then, not education, is the critical quality, which is leſs likely to be perverted without than with education; and the deduction fairly is, that he who ſits in a theatre determined to let whatever paſſes before him have its full effect on his paſſions without reſerve or abatement, is a fairer and therefore a better theatrical critic than he who weighs every thing in the ballance of conſideration, and while he pauſes on the diſcovery of a few blemiſhes, loſes ſight of a number of beauties. The ſpectator in the two ſhilling gallery then ſeems beſt to anſwer this deſcription, and it will be difficult to find an argument to prove that in this acceptation SHAKESPEAR did not uſe the word judicious.

faithful portraiture of them, every effect that can unlock the anxious mind, or gratify the ſuſceptible fancy; and, when ſatisfied with exploring and laying open to view the motley group of affections that characterize nature in the beings of this world, he ſtretches his comprehenſive imagination and invents a new world, inhabited with beings the offspring of his own fancy, who in their allegorical character give a refinement to virtue, an averſion to vice, and a ridicule to folly, which no actual repreſentation of them could have had the force or the beauty to convey.

Thus SHAKESPEAR, by having left nothing unrepreſented either as a poſitive and naked exhibition of nature, or a deduced and figurative deſcription of her, has gone unequivocally beyond all other writers; and were there nothing elſe to ſanction his aſtoniſhing merit and extend his wide fame, he would yet indiſputably ſtand above all dramatic authors ancient and modern.

But, when we conſider that there had been no ſchool in which he might ſtudy this art, that no dramatic writer ſince ÆSCHYLUS, whoſe ſoul ſeems as if it had tranſmigrated till it was born anew in SHAKESPEAR, had been equal to the meritorious taſk of reſtoring the glare of MELPOMENE's dagger

and perfecting the poliſh on the mirror of THALIA; when we conſider that the theatre in ten years, in the hands of SHAKESPEAR, attained all that perfection which it had loſt for more than two thouſand, and boaſted additional perfection never known to it before in the courſe of the world, it is impoſſible to contemplate the character of this great man with a degree of wonder equal to its value, which I conſider as the higheſt climax of panegyric; and yet theſe conſiderations are never afforded, and all we can learn from writers, whoſe geniuſes would be complimented by the poſſeſſion of a capacity to comprehend the genius of SHAKESPEAR, gives us no more than permiſſion to aſſert, that he was an extraordinary man, when it was admitted that he had received but an indifferent education, and that, though there were paſſages in his works of great and wonderful beauty, there were, nevertheleſs, numerous faults which never ought to be permitted.

As to the faults, I ſhall ſpeak of them more particularly hereafter, when I think it will not be very difficult to prove that they are not ſo numerous not of ſuch magnitude as the world is taught to believe by the critics; I do not care much what they themſelves believe on the ſubject, though I hope for the ſake of common ſenſe and their own reputation, they do not believe half they aſſert; as

to the beauties, they are too indelibly impreſſed on the heart of every one who has heard or read them to need explanation.

But a few words as to the education of SHAKESPEAR, for though I am not writing his life I have a great pride in being the hiſtorian of his mind. He received the common advantages of learning in what is called a grammar ſchool; that is to ſay, a place where a boy of any tolerable genius may learn all that the maſter is capable of teaching him in ſix months, and where boys in general ſtudy for years and at laſt know nothing.

Whether SHAKESPEAR learned little or much at this ſchool makes nothing either for or againſt my argument. I can very willingly ſuppoſe that the ſcholar was very ſoon able to teach the maſter. It was not in this grammar ſchool where he received that education which has wrought his celebrity. It was in the ſchool of nature, who condeſcended to be his inſtructreſs. The lady fell in love with him; was captivated; he was her ADONIS, her ENDYMION, and both her beauty and her chaſtity yielded to the irreſiſtible impulſe; while he, with all the gallantry, yet the delicacy of an honourable lover, and a faithful knight, conſecrated his life to the ſervice

of his miſtreſs, pleaded her cauſe, redreſſed her wrongs, and, with the trueſt conſtancy and moſt ardent gratitude, made her beauty the perpetual theme of his panegyric.

If ÆSCHYLUS, when, GOD knows, grammar ſchools had nothing to do with learning, but when men were called wiſe becauſe they uſed firſt ſo many words as ſerved ſimply to expreſs ſuch ideas as nature taught them, and good, becauſe their minds adopted no ideas but what tended to promote general morality: if ÆSCHYLUS, ſtudying in the ſchool of nature, repreſented the great actions and glorious atchievements of his countrymen, and felt emulouſly and meritoriouſly that by that means he ſhould render GREECE and human nature a benefit, why ſhould we deny the ſame merit to SHAKESPEAR more than two thouſand years afterwards, when grammar ſchools actually flouriſhed. But it would wrong my cauſe to waſte too much anxiety about it; and nothing but a neceſſity for ſtrong and incontrovertible argument to cope with the opinions of men, certainly great and reputable, except in their charitable warning to the world of faults in another which are not yet, however, generally diſcovered, and, after all, not of the magnitude of their own, would have induced me to dwell ſo

minutely on a theme that, with men of fair and candid diſcrimination, recommends itſelf and ſpeaks its own eulogium.

The general merit of SHAKESPEAR manifeſts itſelf in a thouſand various ways. Take any one of the paſſions which he has moulded at will to ſerve the general purpoſe of inſtruction and amuſement, and ſee to what an aſtoniſhing pitch he has affected the human heart by a critical and intereſting diſplay of it.

Is the paſſion love? See how he has followed it through all its viciſſitudes. The delicate tenderneſs, the fond impatience, the impetuous ardour, the noble conſtancy of ROMEO and JULIET, perhaps, has not a parallel in language. To youthful love every thing is poſſible; and the exquiſite nonſenſe that SHAKESPEAR has put into the mouth of the doating, enamoured, yet delicate JULIET, is full of poetic beauty, ſo boundleſsly, ſo extravagant, and yet ſo truly natural, that we are equally captivated with her love and her innocence.

The love of ROMEO is no leſs admirably drawn, It is impetuous, thoughtleſs, and raſh, yet manly,

noble, and generous; but its characteriſtic is nature, He leaps the orchard wall and braves the reſentment of JULIET's relations, out of love, yet preſently, out of this very love, he becomes a coward and puts up with an inſult from of thoſe relations; nor is he rouſed out of this apathy till called upon to revenge the death of his friend.

In the garden ſcene, ſurely nothing can be ſo beautiful as the enchanted, yet reſpectful, manner in which he liſtens to the unaffected tenderneſs, the timid honeſty, the techy impatience of JULIET. His love, profound, and awful, recedes from his tongue to his heart; her's, inconſiderate and volatile, flies from her heart to her tongue, till, at length impelled to reply to her fond confeſſion, which diſdains all hypocriſy, and derides all ſubterfuge, they join in interchanging vows, tender and affectionate on her part, manly and honourable on his.

Abſence only renders more amiable the noble and exalted minds of thoſe lovers. His deſpair at hearing the ſentence of baniſhment, his horror at the news of JULIET's death, and his ſolemn determination to follow her; and her reſigned compliance with the friar's ſtratagem, her awful manner of executing it, and her deſtroying herſelf, after every

hope has failed her, are maſterly pictures of exquiſite love *.

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* MERCIER was ſo charmed with ROMEO and JULIET, and ſo diſtreſſed that the lovers ſhould become victims to the unjuſt and unreaſonable enmity of their families, that he has given the plot a new turn. The play never was performed, but it has all the delicacy, fineſſe, and truth of that admirable author. BENVOLIO, having long foreſeen the conſequence of this family hatred, does his utmoſt to excite the love of ROMEO and JULIET, in order to bring about a reconciliation. He finds both the families averſe to his project, and, therefore, connives at a private marriage. Every thing happens as in SHAKESPEAR'S play. BENVOLIO, however, in the place of the friar, having from his infancy ſtudied chemiſtry, adminiſters a potion to JULIET; and, contriving that ROMEO ſhould be informed of the death, furniſhes him with another. ROMEO opens the tomb and finding JULIET apparently dead, drinks the potion and falls down at her ſide. In the mean, BENVOLIO having alarmed the two fathers they preſently behold their two children in this ſtate. After reading to them a ſevere lecture, and reproaching them for their conduct and the dreadful conſequences of their mutual enmity, he honeſtly confeſſes that he has wrought all this; tells them that this ſeeming death of theſe lovers is but a ſleep; that he alone, however, knows the charm to revive them; and that, if they will diſcard their unjuſt anger and vow perpetual amity, their children ſhall wake and revive the double pleaſure of being reſtored to life and to the arms of their parents; but that, if they heſitate, it will be too late. In that caſe he knows he ſhall be conſidered as their murderer, but that he would rather die than witneſs a rancour ſo diſhonourable to themſelves and ſuch a ſcandal to human nature. The reſult is obvious. The lovers revive, and their affection is crowned with the approbation and bleſſing of their fathers. I ſhall only add that the Frenchman merely alters the ſtory; he does not attempt to improve

Were I to go on inveſtigating the various ways in which SHAKESPEAR has treated this one paſſion, I ſhould greatly exceed the limits I am obliged to preſcribe for myſelf. I ſhall, therefore, for the preſent paſs by the noble and perſevering conſtancy of IMOGEN, the patient and endearing tenderneſs of DESDEMONA, the generous and enterprizing affection of ROSALIND, the ſilent and devouring paſſion of VIOLA, and all thoſe great and unexampled proofs of conſummate ſtrength of mind and profound judgment of the human heart in which SHAKESPEAR, though he may have been in one inſtance now and then equalled by a particular author, taking his writings on the paſſion of love in their full and comprehenſive ſenſe, he has clearly excelled every author.

But let us inſtance this paſſion further, together with jealouſy and the other branches of it, as well as all thoſe different affections of the mind, which he bared to the ſight and penetrated with a critical nicety that always appealed directly to the heart, by an examination of his different works; in which,

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upon SHAKESPEAR, whoſe genius he reverences, and to whoſe productions he had upon all occaſions moſt willingly paid a warm tribute of admiration.

that I may get into no controverſy about a matter perfectly immaterial to the reputation of SHAKESPEAR, or the information of the world, I ſhall ſuppoſe his plays to have been written in that chronological order which is generally admitted to be correct; though I cannot help confeſſing that I have ſeen no authority by which I am convinced that it is ſo.

CHAP. III.

SHAKESPEAR's PLAYS.

Titus Andronicus is ſaid by the regulation before alluded to to have been SHAKESPEAR's firſt play, and printed in 1611, but performed in 1589*. All this may be poſſible, but the general accounts of it ſay

* To ſhew how eaſy it is to cavil, I ſhall inſtance a circumſtance here, which, though of ſo little moment that to mention it as a thing of conſequence would be almoſt as abſurd as to get involved in the cobweb enquiries of his commentators, will ſhew that it is impoſſible that SHAKESPEAR's firſt play could have been produced in 1589; for in that very year in the mayoralty of HART, a thing extremely eaſy to aſcertain, players of all deſcriptions were abſolutely put down upon the application of that magiſtrate to the lord treaſurer. We ſee, however, that immediately after that year, playhouſes were created as by magic; and, as there can be no doubt, but all this aroſe from the extraordinary and unexpected excellence of the writings of SHAKESPEAR, it is more proper, though it is a pityful contention, to fix the appearance of his firſt play one year, if not two years later. In which caſe what becomes of that authority, which though I cannot bow to, I ſhall adopt, merely becauſe a year ſooner or later in the production of a thing will not alter the ſterling merit of the thing itſelf.

that it was performed in 1594, by the ſervants of lord PEMBROKE, lord DERBY, and lord ESSEX. Much has been ſaid to prove that this play was not written by our great poet; the arguments, however, to prove this are rather nugatory. RAVENSCROFT, who altered it and called it a tragedy of his own, might very naturally have had perſonal reaſons for inducing the world to think that it was not SHAKESPEAR'S; but his argument, that it was brought to the theatre and touched up by SHAKESPEAR, is too ridiculous, for he was at that time only an actor and could not have taken the manager upon him to this degree.

If thoſe who reject this play as SHAKESPEAR'S think it inferior to the reſt of his productions, the doubt is eaſily cleared by recollecting that it was his firſt effort. There are certainly ſome things in it equal to his happieſt fallies; and, as we know thoſe are ſuperior to the writings of any man who ever lived, the queſtion to be aſked is, and this will perpetually occur, if SHAKESPEAR did not write *Titus Andronicus*, who did?

THEOBALD, who after all is the moſt pardonable of all SHAKESPEAR'S commentators, has taken this play into his edition as genuine; and, notwithſtanding this opinion of his has been luſtily combated by

later conjecture, that, backed by the ſtrong writings, the diſcrimination of character, and thoſe peculiar marks of genius which were worne ſo indelibly by SHAKESPEAR, and which appear, not always, but very frequently in this play, I ſhall not heſitate to believe, and therefore aſſert that it is written by that great man with whom nature, a proud diſtinction, complimented this country.

Love's Labour Loſt, performed, at leaſt we will ſo conclude, in 1591, has, as well as *Titus Andronicus*, been rejected as a genuine play of SHAKESPEAR. The cabal againſt it, however, has not run ſo high, and, therefore, all his editors, poor SHAKESPEAR, Oh that admiration and pity ſhould belong to the ſame man! have concurred right or wrong to admit it into their collections.

As *Titus Andronicus* was SHAKESPEAR's firſt tragedy, ſo *Love's Labour Loſt* was his firſt comedy, and thus the whole myſtery appears to be ſolved. Theſe plays are full of irregularities owing clearly to the inexperience of the author, the prejudices he had to combat, and the taſte he had to create. When HERCULES cleared the Augean ſtable it was very unlikely that he came out clean himſelf. Why will not men be candid? Why not ſay at once that it is not in nature to attain perfection in a moment, if at

all. If they would lament inſtead of condemn, and extol inſtead of commend, it would be the true criticiſm due to SHAEKSPEAR.

Love's Labour Loſt abounds with beauties. The character of BIRON, conſidered as ſo early an effort, is inimitable. The admirable brilliancy which pervades the dialogue has no fault but playful redundancy, and though it has been objected to, by Dr. JOHNSON, as obſcene and vulgar, and improper to have been performed before a maiden queen, who, by the way, had been accuſtomed to liſten to much worſe obſcenity and vulgarity, for the obſcenity of SHAKESPEAR is purity compared to thoſe who wrote before him, yet this great admirer of truth and ſentiment is compelled to allow that there is no play "that has more evident marks of the hand of "SHAKESPEAR."

In the ſame year, SHAKESPEAR is ſaid to have produced the firſt part of *Henry the Sixth*, and in the following year the ſecond and third parts of the ſame play; and as there is a continuation of the ſtory of that unhappy prince, I ſhall conſider them under one head.

SHAKESPEAR had hitherto indulged his pro-

penſity for dramatic writing by treating ſubjects with which his principles as a patriot were not concerned. He had only conſulted his feelings as a poet. If from deſign, the election was judicious; if from impulſe, nature was working in him that maturity neceſſary to atchieve the great deſigns ſhe was mediating for him, for now the time arrived when he was deſtined to prove himſelf the Engliſh ÆSCHYLUS; when the fancied proweſs of foreign or imaginary heroes was to yield to the actual exploits of his own countrymen; to be handed down by him as a faithful record of all the virtues and vices of the Engliſh nation for the imitation or abhorrence of poſterity.

No pen but that of SHAKESPEAR was competent to undertake this maſterly taſk. To become the dramatic hiſtorian of his own country became peculiarly his province, and there are more traits of real hiſtory at this moment remembered by the Engliſh through the medium of the plays than all that library of contradiction and abſurdity, which, as an ingenious author ſays, "ſome have been facetiouſly "pleaſed to call the Hiſtory of England."

Theſe three plays contain moſt wonderful proofs of SHAKESPEAR's great and extraordinary genius. The characters are drawn with correct truth and

prodigious force. The timid HENRY led about by his turbulent queen, the bold WARWICK, the ſubtle GLOUCESTER, whoſe different ambitions and the means of attaining their end, exhibit a moſt commanding and maſterly judgment in the manner of throwing over the paſſion that different ſhadows neceſſary to releive it, are ſo many confirmations of his graſping at all minds and at all motives.

The philoſophy and reſignation of HENRY is uncommonly admirable. The diſtinction between goodneſs and greatneſs, one the perfection of nature and an emulation of the deity; the other a mixture of artificial wants interwoven into our deſires and actions by reſtleſs and ambitious ſtruggles for ſuperiority, are exhibited maſterly and happily in the contraſt between HENRY and MARGARET both of whom are in nature and yet both out of their ſphere. If SHAKESPEAR had written nothing but that wonderful ſoliloquy uttered by the timid HENRY, whicn he ſits upon the hill contemplating the dreadful effects of that battle he has not the courage to witneſs, poſterity would have pointed out the page as a maſter piece of beauty and ſublimity.

But to dwell upon the ſeparate merits of theſe

plays would be to write a treatiſe inſtead of a hiſtory, It would require an examination into all thoſe nice points of diſcrimination in which nature taught SHAKESPEAR to develope the motives of the human heart. I ſhall content myſelf, therefore, with noticing that SHAKESPEAR having thus far ſhewn in what way the affetions of the mind may be meritoriouſly wrought on to ſtimulate men to good and great actions, and inſtanced theſe truths by portraying manners at home, the ſtage began to grow important, the characters in a common life as well as thoſe of kings and heroes became familiar by paſſing in review, and the conduct of mankind imbibed new dignity from an attention to the leſſons of SHAKESPEAR.

Pericles was as we are told, performed in 1592. It would be as difficult to pronounce that this play was wholly written by SHAKESPEAR as that it was not. That he had not a hand in it, or as HEYWOOD calls it, at leaſt a mean finger will hardly be aſſerted for it has thoſe marks of peculiar felicity which I cannot think any mind enjoyed in the ſame degree as that of SHAKESPEAR; but, as it is more natural that he ſhould aſſiſt the labours of another than condeſcend to permit another to aſſiſt him, and, as at the time of *Pericles* there is not the ſame excuſe

of inexperience as at the time of *Titus Andronicus*, it is certainly feaſible to join with the major part of thoſe who have been ſo ſolicitous to eſtabliſh a fact, not, however, very material, and allow that the opinion that *Pericles* is not entirely the production of SHAKESPEAR has certainly probability on its ſide *.

Loerine produced in 1593, has ſtill fewer pretentions to be conſidered as a genuine play of SHAKESPEAR than *Pericles*. Indeed it has ſcarcely any veſtiges by which it appears to have the advantages of his aſſiſtance; ſome, however, there certainly are, for in the edition of it, publiſhed in 1595, the title announces that it was "overſeen and cor-"rected by WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR," and this very unaffectedly eſtabliſhes a proof that it muſt have been the production of ſome author of that

* There is one way of reconciling the mind to a belief of SHAKESPEAR's having produced this play without the aſſiſtance of any author then living. The ſtory is very ancient and had been treated frequently before, and it is poſſible, eſpecially as it muſt have been very haſtily written, SHAKESPEVR having in the ſame year brought forward his ſecond and third parts of *Henry the Sixth*, that he merely dtamatized the ſtory from one or more of its hiſtorians; and by throwing in his own excellent ingredients, gave it in ſome meaſure that peculiar reliſh ſo delicious to the taſte of thoſe who love to banquet the mind with the wholeſome and nutricious food, furniſhed by nature and prepared by reaſon.

time was was glad enough to benefit himſelf by ſuch able aſſiſtance.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona made its appearance in the ſame year. This piece diſplays a prodigious variety of thoſe beauties which belonged only to SHAKESPEAR. The plot, which is taken from a novel, as far as it relates to the management of the ſcenery is certainly very intricate and almoſt inexplicable, but conſidered merely as a ſtory, it has great ſimplicity and nature. The characters are drawn with ſtrength and truth, and it is remarkable that in this play we have the firſt idea of what has been ſince called genteel comedy. The elegance, yet the contraſt in VALENTINE and PROTHEUS, is a very ſtriking picture, not only of the etiquette, but the perfidy of polite life; for PROTHEUS is more corrupted by education than nature, of which his remorſe and his contrition are proofs, while VALENTINE has a mind ſo correctly inclined to rectitude that faſhion and folly cannot corrupt it.

But this is not all. The two ſervants, LAUNCE and SPEED, who are the foils of their maſters, make the whole a complete reſemblance of that ſort of play which is the foundation of almoſt all the comedies of both the Spaniards and the French; and as theſe plays did not obtain with them, at leaſt in this

perfect form, till CALDERON, who was cotemporary with CORNEILLE, SHAKESPEAR may be ſaid to have been the founder of this ſpecies of comedy. We muſt admit at the ſame time that the germ was in the Spaniards, but his mind was the only ſoil which could expand and bring it to perfection.

The chronological order, which I purſue right or wrong in this account of SHAKESPEAR's productions, even if it ſhould be deficient in veracity, has certainly the appearance of good ſenſe in its favour, for it ſeems to lay before the reader that ſort of rotation in which a well wiſher to his reputation would deſire that he had written them. The redundant luxuriance, in which, in the wilds of SHAKESPEAR's abundant and productive imagination, one cannot ſometimes ſee the wood for trees, begins as he goes on to be more and more got under. The underwood is better cleared out and the plants, intended to ſwell and enlarge, have more room and better air to accelerate their approach to maturity.

The two Gentlemen of Verona abounds with poetical beauties ſuch as we have not before been able to diſcover even in SHAKESPEAR. His towering fancy in this particular piece playfully aſcends to thoſe ſublime heights, dangerous to others but

always familiar to him; ſometimes hazardous, but never alarming; often trackleſs, yet always aſtoniſhing.

The Winter's Tale was performed in 1594. When the grand objection in this play is got over which is the very long period of time it embraces, and the different countries it traverſes, we turn our thoughts to the numerous and inimitable beauties it contains; which, whether conſidered on the ſide of character or language, are the beſt ſtyle of SHAKESPEAR. This play has been very judiciouſly ſeparated into two dramatic pieces; and, viewed in this advantageous light, it has very few faults of any deſcription. The ſubject of that which GARRICK brought forward as a tragedy in three acts under its original title, and in which, to do him juſtice, he ſacredly ſteered clear of mutilation, as he did alſo in his alteration of *Romeo and Juliet*, is great, natural, and affecting.

Jealouſy, of which turbulent paſſion SHAKESPEAR has ſo often evinced a moſt critical judgment, for he has always given it a different motive and a different diſcrimination, is moſt pathetically depicted in the character of LEONTES, and gives a lively and noble opportunity of bringing forward contraſt, the life of the drama, by the

honourable and conſcious rectitude in the juſtification of HERMOINE. The loves of FLORIZEL and PERDITA, which from the other piece, are ſo ſimple, ſo paſtoral, ſo tender, and ſo delicate, that their force and their language are the deſcription of an amiable and meritorious paſſion, belonging to all ranks, and equally a bleſſing to the peaſant and the prince. In ſhort, love and its viciſſitudes mark the various merits of this admirable piece, which SHAKESPEAR here, as every where elſe, has explored at will, and turned to advantage at pleaſure.

A Midſummer's Night's Dream came out in 1595, SHAKESPEAR, having ranged ſo far though the fields of nature, began now to feel an inclination to explore the regions of fancy; which he did to ſo good a purpoſe, that all the critics, even the moſt ſarcaſtic, have agreed, that in this wild and beautiful play, if the fairies do not ſpeak the language of common nature no one can pronounce that they do not ſpeak their own.

Every writer, equal to the taſk, compliments his country by diſplaying all the poetic fire of which his genius is capable. Here has SHAKESPEAR in one inſtance paid his country this compliment. Common tradition had familiarized the idea of

fairies, and many a ballad and poem had made them the lares of the Engliſh. His fertile and creative fancy, therefore could not, to ſhew its extent and variety, have been better employed. SPENSER had trod the ground before him, with prodigious felicity and ſterling excellence; but SHAKESPEAR, born to ſoar above all others, repreſented what his great predeceſſor only narrated.

We come now to conſider SHAKESPEAR every moment in a ſuperior light, for great and admirable as his talents have hitherto appeared, they are yet growing conſiderably into much more ſtrength and improvement.

Romeo and Juliet his next play, which was produced alſo in 1595, is a wonderful performance; and how we can poſſibly underſtand that, ſo ſoon after his mind had been entangled in the labyrnths of enchantment, and his fancy frolicking over the imaginary beauties of Fairly Land, he could calmly ſet down exquiſitely to deſcribe literal nature, will be difficult, if not impoſſible.

This play, which is founded on real hiſtory, is ſo conſtantly in the mouths of its various ſpectators and readers that to deſcribe particularly the tenderneſs of the lovers, the rooted animoſity of their

parents, the different effects of reſentment in their relations, in ſhort, the piety of the Friar, the loquacity of the Nurſe, the wit of MERCUTIO, or thoſe other points that conſtitute its beauty and make up its collective merit is certainly unneceſſary; but, as every opportunity of paying tribute of reſpect to the admirable genius of its incomparable author is with me irreſiſtable, I ſhall ſpeak of ſome things which have not probably yet been noticed.

Romeo and Juliet is beſt known by that copy of it which is generally performed, and in which GARRICK has very judiciouſly done little more than make SHAKESPEAR alter his own play, fitting the cataſtrophe to the original invention of the noveliſt. The two grand points that GARRICK, by the advice of his friends, has inſiſted on, are the expunging the idea of ROSALIND, and ROMEO's ſudden inconſtancy on the firſt impreſſion of JULIET's ſuperior beauty, and heightening the cataſtrophe, by ROMEO's firſt ſwallowing the poiſon, then in the extacy of finding JULIET ſurvive, forgetting the deſperate act he had committed, and flattering himſelf with a deluſive hope of future happineſs, and, again, the aſtoniſhment and delight of JULIET at recovering her lover, all which is inſtantly damped by a diſcovery that her fallacious hopes are to be but momentary.

It must be confessed these alterations are more admissible by common auditors, than the incidents as they originally stood; not that they were forced or unnatural before, for violent love breeds with it inconstancy, because it is always inconsiderate, or as JULIET sweetly expresses it,

> too rash, too unadvised,
> Too like the lightening, which doth cease to be
> Ere one can say it lightens,

But this does not seem to be all that SHAKESPEAR intended in ROMEO's amorous apostacy. He has appeared to insist upon this incident to give an awful grandeur to his plot, the great drift of which is, and this has been but little considered, the solemn warning to MONTAGUE and CAPULET, by the dreadful sacrifice of their children, and in them to all other parents, of the horrid effects of domestic enmity.

To bring about this great and important end, is ROMEO made inconstant; is JULIET, who had been taught all her life to hate the MONTAGUES, made as suddenly to fall in love with her mortal enemy; or, as she describes it, her only love sprung from her only hate. These circumstances discover a depth, a solidity of which SHAKESPEAR is oftner capable than suspected. This love, so born, he

contrives with the pen of a poet and the hand of a maſter, in various ways, and by various degrees, to warm and encourage, till he makes even the Friar conſent to the union of the lovers, which it was poſitively his duty not to do, from a reflection that Providence, from this fortunate event, might ſo open the eyes of the parents to the folly and injuſtice of their mutual and long exiſting animoſity, "to turn their houſes' rancour to pure love."

This very cataſtrophe has even been attempted, but never with ſucceſs, for it could not be ſo impreſſive or ſo tragic. I have ſhewn in the plot of MERCIER of how much it is capable, but SHAKESPEAR did not look ſo ſuperficially, Meritorious puniſhment has been clearly with him his decided drift. Even the lovers tender, delicate, and honourable as they are, merit puniſhment; for their conduct is thoughtleſsly a deviatiation from the very principles they profeſs; it is born of imprudence, and nurſed by deceit; and, in this point of view, it is better that ROMEO ſhould have been inconſtant, and JULIET at leaſt capricious.

Nay, the imprudence of the Friar, with all his wiſdom and ſagacity, is moſt admirably thrown in. Having in one inſtance, from the beſt motives in the world, done a poſitive wrong he is obliged to

perſiſt, ſtill comforting himſelf with the purity of his intentions. He becomes the honourable pander of the lovers, he leagues with a chattering and perfidious ſervant, whoſe honeſty he fears, and whoſe ſervility he ought to diſtruſt. Inſtead of wiſely attempting to apply a ſolid remedy, inſtead of manfully ſtepping forward and avowing the marriage of ROMEO and JULIET, at the moment ſhe is menaced with the hands of PARIS, and attempting, through the medium of the Prince, to bring about a reconciliation between the two families; he, timid, irreſolute, and one would almoſt think vain of his judgment in the conduct of intrigue, adviſes a deſperate and unwiſe means, not to bring about any wiſhed for end, but to procaſtinate and put off the evil day at the hazard of accumulated miſchief.

The ſum of his danger is by this time ſo aſcertained that he has cut off his own retreat. He, therefore, makes another confident in Friar JOHN, employs him to carry a letter, which miſcarrying, he ſeizes his iron crow and romantically undertakes himſelf to releaſe JULIET from the vault of her anceſtors. All this folly is he guilty of, and yet you pity and almoſt admire him from beginning to end; but remember it is impoſſible to commend him, and this is the nice diſtinction of SHAKESPEAR

has so well drawn; pointing out, that in the best and the wisest, a single deviation from the path of rectitude must lead to remorse and may, perhaps, to punishment.

As to the character of MERCUTIO, concerning which so much has been said and written, SHAKESPEAR has certainly introduced it to give fresh force to the colouring his main design. He represents this young officer as an elegant man, a complete gentleman, and an accomplished wit, and that the characters in the play, and the spectators at it, may look with additional horror at the family disputes of the MONTAGUES and the CAPULETS, he is lost, to one, at a time of life when his brilliant talents and engaging manners are at their height, and, therefore, ardently cherished by his friends, and, to the other, at the moment he has become their delight and admiration.

In the face of DRYDEN, whose great talents I shall have hereafter plenty of opportunity to shew how sincerely I reverence, I look upon this to have been SHAKESPEAR's sole motive for killing MERCUTIO so early in the play. It had been said by the critics that SHAKESPEAR had so surpassed his own expectation in the character of MERCUTIO that he killed him in the third act, lest, had he con-

tinued him, he ſhould have been killed by him; and this DRYDEN has affected to ſmile at, under an idea that he was "no ſuch formidable perſon, for that "he might have lived through the play and died in "his bed without any danger to a poet."

This tradition, and this declaration are equally wrong. The trait of MERCUTIO's death, in the manner we witneſs it, is, for the reaſons I have given above, a moſt affecting circumſtance, and that SHAKESPEAR could not have carried on this character to the end of ten plays with the ſame force and ſpirit is ridiculous to aſſert. On the other hand; that DRYDEN, who was all candour and full of judgment, ſhould think ſo indifferently of the wit of MERCUTIO, is not very eaſily underſtood, even with Dr. JOHNSON's mode of accounting for it, who ſays that, in this remark, "DRYDEN was not "in queſt of truth," and that "the ſallies of MER-"CUTIO were beyond his reach," for no man ſearched more after truth than DRYDEN, and he has given ſufficient proof in his own admirable writings that the higher the ſallies of any wit were elevated they would the more eaſily come in contact with his genius.

But to put aſide the curious queſtion of whether or no SHAKESPEAR created a perſonage and

then was so terified at his formidable appearance, that he watched an opportunity and gave him an unlucky blow under ROMEO's arm for fear of worse consequence to himself; that great judge of nature, who had violated propriety much seldomer than has been generally admitted, had a motive for bringing about this premature death which does not seem to have been noticed.

ROMEO, having killed TIBALT, it would have been manifest injustice in the Duke not to have taken "the forfeit life of ROMEO" had he not qualified his sentence of banishment with describing TIBALT's crime to have been worse than ROMEO's. SHAKESPEAR, therefore, makes MERCUTIO the Duke's relation; "who, as his blood had issued "from MERCUTIO's wounds," whose life ROMEO endeavoured to save, sees the crime in a much more henious light in THIBALT than in ROMEO, and, therefore, when MONTAGUE pleads for his son saying that "he but took the forfeit life of TIBALT," the discrimination of banishment is correctly consistent. Thus in perfect consonance to dramatic construction, a subordinate character is disposed of to give better opportunity of keeping a principal character in the fore ground; and this I believe is a rational way of accounting for this mighty circum-

ſtance which has created ſo much cavil than to ſuppoſe, admirable as the character of MERCUTIO is, that SHAKESPEAR was at all afraid of continuing it to the end with encreaſed warmth, had propriety warranted this neceſſity.

Before we leave Romeo and Juliet, we muſt not forget to notice the Nurſe; a ſort of character in which SHAKESPEAR took particular delight, becauſe he delighted in every thing that was natural. He has made this talkative old woman full of ſelf importance, and, therefore, ſhe is permitted to take liberties which no other deſcription of ſervants would dare to do; but having given her all the low and corrupted cunning of a thorough paced mercenary domeſtic, from her own depravity of mind and liquoriſh vanity, ſhe endeavours to ſeduce that beauty and innocence which is the conſtant theme of her praiſe; and having perſuaded her into ſomething more than imprudence in her marriage with ROMEO, to avert the conſequences, ſhe does not heſitate to deviſe an infamous method of compounding the buſineſs by her marriage, nevertheleſs, with PARIS.

Thus ſhe is poſſeſſed of cunning which is counteracted by her ignorance, thus ſhe inſinuates herſelf into the ſecrets of her young lady to gain over

her an insolent ascendancy, and thus, a stranger to the gratitude due to her benefactors, she abuses that indulgence, and betrays that confidence of which they themselves ought to have known her unworthy.

There cannot be a proper lesson to parents and children than this. Half, perhaps nine-tenths of the various instances of family misery happen through the improper confidence placed in servants; and thus SHAKESPEAR has made his nurse, who after all may be in great measure excused on the score of pampered indulgence which she ignorantly takes to herself as her right, and implicit reliance which gives her a reprehensible importance, an instrument to shew by what natural degrees the smallest neglect of prudence in parents may produce the most fatal consequences to their children, and how a deviation of prudence in children may prove a source of misery and regret to their parents.

Thus it is impossible to blame any thing in the conduct or construction of this play. It is in vain to say that tragedy and comedy are unnaturally blended together, for the reverse is the fact. The story is purely domestic; and familiar circumstances, however productive in the end of distress and misery, ought not to be treated otherwise than as SHAKES-

PEAR has treated them; nay, in this play particularly, he has managed the comic part with a moſt happy judgment; for, as the play advances and the intereſt it is intended to create becomes more and more important, the comic characters drop off and leave the mind at leiſure, without mixture or interruption, to attend to the plot as it approaches to, perhaps, the moſt intereſting cataſtrophe ever repreſented to an audience; and here we have another proof of the great propriety of SHAKESPEAR'S killing MERCUTIO in the third act.

The Comedy of Errors was produced the year after Romeo and Juliet. The objections that have been made to this play are that it outrages probability, that the miſtakes are repeated till they tire, and that the cataſtrophe is foreſeen in the firſt act.

Certainly probability is a good deal ſtretched at the idea of the Twin Maſters and the Twin Servants ſhould be ſo remarkably alike, and this is all, for it is clearly poſſibe, and if the audience were only preſented with one of thoſe genmini no man could have cavilled at it, I am glad, however, that SHAKESPEAR gave us two, though not ſtrictly within the bounds of propriety, for the abundant opportunity it has given him of indulging that true vein of comic humour he poſſeſſed in ſuch an ex-

traordinary degree overcomes, liberally taken, all objection.

The miſtakes are very frequently repeated, and at length they as certainly tire, but this is more owing to the impoſſibility of properly repreſenting the play than the want of variety in its author. Could we get two Antipoluſes and two Dromios exactly alike, the audience, would be equally deceived with the characters and the equivoque would be complete.

As to the anticipation of the cataſtrophe, my objection is not ſo ſtrong to that as that the cataſtrophe itſelf is a kind of vehicle, a kind of underpart, to ſet off the detached ſcenes. But I do not much in the preſent caſe mind this. I know of eminent painters who are beſt known by their ſketches. Let us, therefore, conſider *The Comedy of Errors*, though by the way there is a wonderful deal of fine pencelling in it, as a ſketch; and let us not, becauſe every thing that comes from the hand of a great maſter cannot always be perfect, criticiſe ourſelves, in our examination of this play, out of the irreſiſtable pleaſure it conſtantly affords us both on the ſtage and in the cloſet.

If the objections of the critics to The Comedy

of Errors require so ſtrong a defence, what muſt be the critical fate of Hamlet? Which, with all its tranſcendants beauties, its prodigious ſtrength, its faſcinating charms, its riveting intereſt, and its extraordinary variety, has more faults than the critics have time to tell, or breath to give utterance.

Hamlet was brought out in 1596; and when we conſider that this wonderful production, worth the reputation of twenty celebrated authors, and I ſhould not be fearful of naming them, was written, together with the four laſt plays we have received, in two years, what words can the beſt ingenuity ſupply us with equal to the deſcription of the aſtoniſhing talents of this incomparable writer!

I know not if the objections to this play excite moſt one's pity, or one's indignation. I'll admit at once all the faults; but juſtice, truth, common ſenſe forbid, that this miſt of faults ſhould obſcure, in any liberal mind, the ſplendour they are ignorantly ſaid to hide. I'll admit the tardineſs of HAMLET, I'll admit that the Ghoſt is not revenged becauſe the inſtrument of the revenge falls in accompliſhing the death of the adulterer, and the murderer; I'll admit that the death of the unoffending OPHELIA is revolting and unneceſſary; that the amiable LAERTES, practiſing againſt the life of HAM-

LET by the treachery, is unbecoming, and even ignoble.

I will even admit with Mr. VOLTAIRE, who abuſed this play and afterwards ſtole it, that the grave diggers ought not to jeſt in the pariſh church-yard of the palace, as he is pleaſed to call it; that a little curioſity in POLONIUS was not a crime of magnitude enough to deſerve death; and that the King certainly bids the cannon found before the invention of gunpowder. I'll admit of all theſe foils that the diamond may appear more brilliant; but when I have done ſo, will the foureſt critic who has malignantly enjoyed this diſcovery lay his hand on his heart, nay, would VOLTAIRE himſelf with his hundred and twenty volumes, were he alive, and ſay that he would not rather be known by the tragedy of *Hamlet* alone, with all its faults, than his own productions, with all their perfections.

I will not undertake to ſay, in a general ſenſe, that this is a fair way of arguing. Have the faults or perfections of other men any thing to do with this particular object of diſcuſſion? And, if I admit they exiſt, how can I who profeſs myſelf a warm admirer of SHAKESPEAR, for as to an advocate he needs none, get rid of an eſtabliſhed fact? I do not want to get rid of it. I even blazoned it here

to shew its insignificance; to shew how much oftner it had been mentioned than it ought, and how greatly it had been magnified, when the other fact, one would think more worthy their attention as candid and sound critics, of the inumerable and exquisite beauties this faulty piece contains, obtains their acknowledgment in so painful and laboured a manner that every extorted confession gives them a heart burn, and chokes their faint praise in its utterance.

Perhaps these gentlemen were chariatable enough to notice the blemishes of SHAKESPEAR because an enumeration of his perfections was unnecessary. It must be so; for otherwise, what a stain to their truth, and what a drawback on their reputation it must have been that, while men of competent talents, the lawgivers of literature pass over such excellence, it would be known, felt, and understood, by every other man in the kingdom, however illiterate. Let us then imitate their charity, and suppose this to be the case; and then a criterion will be established, rather an Irish one to be sure, that the best way of finding out a man's merit is to search for his defects.

For my own part, I am so content to take things as I find them; and, have to much pleasure in repeating over and over again what I like, that against

all preſident, I ſhall not ſcruple to revive in my mind, by an examination of *Hamlet*, that delight I have ſo frequently and ſo warmly enjoyed. All men agree on the value of a guinea, the beauty of a fine day, the odour of a roſe; nor does a repetition of the enjoyment reſulting from their admiration abate, for it rather encreaſes the grateful ſatisfaction. Upon this principle I ſhall undertake a very welcome taſk; nor ſhall I, becauſe my guinea may be a little ſhort of weight, my day obſcured by a paſſing cloud, or my roſe armed with a few thorns, deduct from the real value of either, but fairly revel in all the pleaſures their beſt qualities are capable of affording me.

In the conduct of *Hamlet*, SHAKESPEAR ſeems more to have treated a ſubject than to have conſtructed a play. Nothing can be finer, more moral, more intereſting than the general deſign, and, in the choice of it, is evinced a great mind, a ſtrong diſcrimination, and a correct claſſical judgment. The ground work is that firſt of all moral obligations, filial piety, and the feelings belonging to that paſſion, known to all hearts, and underſtood by all ranks are roufed by every ſituation in which the moſt fertile imagination and the moſt conſummate art could have placed them.

HAMLET, finding his father prematurely cut off by the hand of death, a father dear to his family, beloved by his ſubjects, and an honour to humanity; would, in reaſon and religion, have found a conſolation, and have reconciled himſelf to this loſs, dreadful and irreparable as it was, as a natural caſualty, and the will of that being, in whoſe hands are the lives of us all, did not a ſecret admonition warn him that all was not right; but this ſuſpicion, difficult to be cheriſhed in a noble mind, requires ſtrong circumſtances to confirm it. His mother's wedding with his uncle, that followed ſo hard upon the death of his father, though it excites his horror, does not exhibit ſufficient proof of a crime which ſeems too abominable for belief; and this credulity on the ſide of virtue is the moſt beautiful feature in the character of HAMLET.

Under the influence of this conflict is HAMLET moſt judiciouſly introduced as the only mourner in his uncle's ſplendid court. With this grief the mother is made unfeelingly to reproach him; hypocritically repreſenting it as the breach of a religious duty which, had ſhe been ſincere, would have been a fact. HAMLET, though not perſuaded, is overruled; and in this ſtate he is left alone to examine his mind, and out of charity, if poſſible, to find a motive for the ſtrange and unnatural conduct of his mother.

Though no man ever threw action into ſuch ſtrong ſituations as SHAKESPEAR, his ſoliloquys are unqueſtionably the fineſt part of his writings, and the fineſt of his ſoliloquys are the deliberations of HAMLET. Being left alone, and feeling himſelf impelled to explore the buſineſs of his father's cruel death, and his mother's ſudden and inceſtuous marriage, his mind ſinks under the impending trial, and he wiſhes for annihilation rather than to undertake the awful taſk.

"Oh that this too, too ſolid fleſh, &c."

He next goes into his mother's conduct, for which he cannot find either motive or excuſe. He deſcribes her fondneſs for his father, recollects that ſhe would hang on him as if deſire encreaſed by feeding, that ſhe followed him to the grave like NIOBE, all tears, and yet in a little month ſhe married his uncle, "My father's brother," ſays he, "but no more "like my father than I to HERCULES." The reſult of this deliberation is that it cannot come to good; and while he is involved in a conſideration of all the dreadful conſequences, likely to be ſhowered on the heads of this wicked pair, the fitteſt mood for the poet's purpoſe, HORATIO and MARCELLUS come to inform him that they have ſeen his father's ghoſt.

Nothing can be better prepared nor conducted than this ſcene. HORATIO, who wants gradually to open his awful commiſſion, begins by telling HAMLET, in anſwer to his enquiries that he came to ſee his fathers burial. The prince, big with the conſequences, replies that he ſhould rather have thought it was to ſee his mother's wedding. This introduces a comment, and, at length, an eulogium from HORATIO on HAMLET's father, on which the pious ſon is rouſed into that famous reply, "He "was a man, take him for all in all, I ſhall not "look upon his like again."

This is the moment for HORATIO to divulge the awful ſecret, nor can any thing be more intereſting than the remainder of this ſcene. The cautious enquiries of HAMLET, his eagerneſs, his tenderneſs for his father, making HORATIO repeat over and over again how he looked, whether he was armed, and other fond circumſtances full of duty and reſpect, are in the beſt ſtyle of dramatic management; till, at length, having aſcertained the fact and felt the whole force of its importance, he exclaims,

"I'll watch to night, perchance 'twill walk again."

and then,

"If it aſſume my noble father's ſhape,
"I'll ſpeak to it, though hell itſelf ſhou'd gape
"And bid me hold my peace."

It now becomes a matter of buſineſs. He diſpatches his friends to wait for him; his ſuſpicions when alone grow ſtronger and ſtronger; he meets the ghoſt; he is urged to revenge, the nature of his father's death is explained, and the powerful climax which this natural and gradual developement of ſo material a circumſtance was meant to attain, comes out in the expreſſion,

"O my prophetic ſoul, my uncle!"

and ſhews that, from the moment of his father's death, his ſuſpicions, which owing to his own nobleneſs of heart he had unwillingly entertained, were influenced by feelings which human nature could not controul.

As to the ſcene of the ghoſt, I ſhall not at preſent enquire into the propriety of introducing a ghoſt at all, nor examine the objections that have been made againſt it by the critics with Mr. VOLTAIRE at their head, who, nevertheleſs, was not content with bringing forward the ghoſt of NINUS in his *Semiramis*, but he made him ſtalk forth at noon day, I ſhall only ſay, that for the ſake of literature, to which this character is a ſhining ornament, I am in common with many thouſands very happy that SHAKESPEAR gave us this ſample of his incomparable abilities.

Taking it for granted that the ſcene between HAMLET and the ghoſt is as natural as any thing elſe, I ſhall venture a word as to its drift and operation. When the awful novelty of his father's reappearance has a little ſubſided, when faſcinating terror has given way to manly reſolution, and the ghoſt finds HAMLET "apt," the horrid ſtory comes out and he is told that "if he has nature in him not to "bear it." This he moſt ſolemnly vows and declares that, for the purpoſe of entertaining and practiſing revenge, he ſhall wipe away from his brain all trivial fond records.

This ſeems to be his motive, which is ſaid to be a ſhallow one, for his conduct to OPHELIA. It does not, however, deſerve ſo much reprehenſion as it has received. The buſineſs of HAMLET is to be thought mad, which diſpoſition, as he calls it, he puts on that he may the better aſk thoſe ſort of odd queſtions which, by being ſatirically thrown in may obtain for him by their ſhrewdneſs and ambiguity, ſuch anſwers as may corroborate the intelligence he has received from the ghoſt; and what can ſo ſubſtantially confirm the opinion of thoſe around him that he is mad, as outrageous behaviour to her he moſt loves, a thing generally underſtood as a criterion of inſanity.

In fact, from the milkineſs of his diſpoſition, and that ſtrong ſenſe of his moral duty that every where mark his character, he pants for better proofs than thoſe he has already received through the means of a ſupernatural agent; and, when he finds that chance has thrown in his way an opportunity, through the medium of the players, of ſearching the matter to the quick, his mind is materially relieved from his fears leſt he ſhould have liſtened to a fiend who came to practice on his melancholy, and tempt him on to damn himſelf; and, to clear up this doubt, he is determined to have grounds more relative.

In his progreſs to this point, how aſtoniſhingly has the poet, in HAMLET's different ſoliloquys, in his ſcenes with POLONIUS, with ROSENCRAUS and GUILDENSTERN, and with the players, indulged himſelf in all that beauty and exquiſite variety of which he alone was capable. Is there any thing in the ancients or the moderns equal to many things in in theſe ſcenes? Is there any thing in PLATO equal to the ſoliloquy, beginning with the words "To be "or not to be?" Is there any thing in the ſtyle of VIRGIL equal to the ſtyle of SHAKESPEAR, or in the piety of ÆNEAS to the piety of HAMLET?

Solid, ſober, convincing argument; ſhrewd,

ſenſible and keen obſervation, and noble, elevated and ſublime ſentiments, every where mark the commanding genius of this wonderful man. The deepeſt and moſt philoſophical truths are ſent home to every comprehenſion by being dreſſed in the moſt perſpicuous ſimplicity. How aſtoniſhingly written is the ſpeech beginning, "Why what a "piece of work is man!" What variety and acuteneſs is there in the examination of real and feigned grief, in his obſervations of the actor's commiſeration for HECUBA, nay, his advice to the actors as to the manner of performing their parts, which every actor of good ſenſe has ever ſince cheriſhed as a treaſure, ſhews that his judgment and penetration embraced every thing. There is nothing ſtrained in his expreſſion, nothing that a child might not extemporaneouſly utter, yet can any thing ſo intimately touch the heart, or ſo impreſſively intereſt the mind?

The play acted before the king, the cloſet ſcene between HAMLET and his mother, ſaid by ſome to be the beſt thing in SHAKESPEAR, and a variety of paſſages give abundant proof of the truth of this aſſertion, all which I could with pleaſure dwell upon were I leſs circumſcribed; as it is I ſhall content myſelf with ſaying that, though I allow the plot gets tame after the death of POLONIUS, that the

mad ſcenes of OPHELIA, beautiful as they are, and her premature deſtruction, might, poetically ſpeaking, have been ſpared, LAERTES having without them ſufficient provocation to rouſe his reſentment, though I wiſh in common with others that the cataſtrophe had been more happily conducted, and agree that the grave diggers are extraneous, yet the prodigious variety of characters and incidents, the warmth and ſtrength with which they are diſcriminated, the truth, the obſervation, the force, the wit, in which piety, ambition, capriciouſneſs, fidelity, vanity, officiouſneſs are ſet up, as objects of imitation or contempt, are ſo numerous in this piece, and produced in ſuch a rapid ſucceſſion, that it is difficult to lay the finger upon a fault without the danger of expunging a beauty.

CHAP. IV.

SHAKESPEAR's PLAYS CONTINUED.

King John, one of thoſe plays which have largely contributed to the general celebrity of SHAKESPEAR, was produced in 1596. There is a boldneſs and a ſtrength in this tragedy which has ſerved to hand down the character of the times both faithfully and meritoriouſly, and ſhewn how greatly the dramatic hiſtorian, through the vehicle of repreſentation, has the advantage of him who merely narrates.

JOHN himſelf is portrayed in a moſt maſterly and commanding manner, and will ever remain a ſtriking leſſon to all monarchs how to ſteer between the extremes of weakneſs and wickedneſs. The ſcene with HUBERT has often been conſidered as one of the fineſt ornaments of the Engliſh language. Indeed it is difficult to ſay what part of its conduct moſt demands our admiration. The tampering with the half villain HUBERT, the dread that the crime

has been actually committed, and at length laying the blame upon the inſtrument, and even catching at the excuſe of having ſeen the aſſaſin in his look, are powerful ſtrokes.

The gallant, noble, and careleſs FAUCONBRIDGE is a moſt happy portrait, and ſpeaks for itſelf as a true likeneſs of RICHARD CŒUR de LION. That mixture of courage and levity, which is ſo faithfully the character of the ſoldier, no one ever knew how to depict like SHAKESPEAR; and, notwithſtanding the critics, we have here a proof that he would have found no difficulty in continuing MERCUTIO to the laſt act, who is perfectly FAUCONBRIDGE, except the roughneſs and the blunt honeſty *.

The other characters in this play are well ſuſtained, and SHAKESPEAR merits the thanks of poſ-

* This is a diſcrimination that we always find moſt critically attended to in SHAKESPEAR. Honour and honeſty, eſſentially mean the ſame thing. The eſſence of both conſiſts in ſhunning meanneſs and every other contemptible quality; but there is a peculiar frankneſs belonging to honeſty with which honour may diſpenſe, and there is an erect dignity in honour which honeſty is unconſcious of. In ſhort honeſty is plain, and honour poliſhed. This is the diſtinction ſo happily hit in the characters of MERCUTIO and FAUCONBRIDGE. Both are honeſt, both are honourable; but let the mind chuſe the appropriate epithet to diſtinguiſh them ſingly, and we ſhall give honeſty to FAUCONBRIDGE, and honour to MERCUTIO.

terity for bringing us intimately acquainted with that weak and wicked monarch, from whoſe vice and folly, as light iſſues out of darkneſs, or a calm becomes more lovely from a contemplation of the ſtorm that preceded it, originated Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights.

Richard the Second was performed in 1597. This play is ſuſpected to have been only reviſed by SHAKESPEAR. Certainly we cannot trace in it his uſual force, either as to the characters or the language. The probability is that it was written in a hurry, which by the way is no excuſe, and, as the circumſtances are wholly taken from the hiſtorians and chroniclers of that day, many paſſages may have been literally tranſplanted from the hiſtory to the play. This having been done, the ſubject was found ſo unproductive that the author never thought it worth his while to finiſh it; and then the utmoſt we can ſay is that SHAKESPEAR was to blame for letting a play come forward unworthy of his reputation.

Alterations of this play have been frequently attempted but always without ſucceſs. One of theſe was by THEOBALD, who dedicated his piece to the earl of ORRERY, from whom he received a hundred pounds in a handſome ſnuff box. Thus moths live

upon books. If men can write why dont they produce books themſelves.

That SHAKESPEAR took very little pains with *Richard the Second* is the more probable from his having produced *Richard the Third* in the ſame year; a bold and moſt extraordinary production. Perhaps there never was ſo prominent a character produced as this, nor one thrown into ſuch a variety of poſitions, every one calculated to accompliſh the end of truth and juſtice, by warning the ſpectators againſt the dreadful effects of inordinate pride, and lawleſs ambition.

RICHARD maſters all hearts, and controuls all minds; working to his purpoſe the paſſions and foibles of mankind at his pleaſure. He adminiſters to the pride of BUCKINGHAM; and, not only by that means accompliſh his ends, but makes him an inſtrument in his own downfall. He ſo avails himſelf of the vanity of lady ANN that ſhe conſents to do the very thing ſhe dreads, and what ſhe knows muſt prove her deſtruction. What can be ſuch a maſter piece as this ſcene? On the very ſpot where ſhe accompanies her huſband towards his grave, ſhe conſents to marry his murderer; and yet is this extraordinary change wrought in ſo artful a manner that

the moſt faſtidious critic will not venture to pronounce it unnatural. Well may he exclaim

"So mourned the dame of EPHESUS her love."

In this manner, off or on the ſcene, is he throughout the play preſent to the imagination; till, at length, having, like the Devil he ſerves, left all thoſe to that fate to which his craft has lured them, he becomes the worſt tool in his own miſerable plot; the feeling at the fall of the reſt being pity, that at his fall execration.

Throughout theſe and other inſtances, with which this play is replete, has SHAKESPEAR moſt artfully warned his ſpectators, not only againſt villainly itſelf but alſo the riſk and danger of conniving at it. Many of the inſtruments of RICHARD, deceived by his hypocriſy, are tempted to ſwerve from rectitude in hopes to work his converſion. Here has our poet ſhewn himſelf a maſter in his art. The beſt motive in the world is no excuſe for committing a poſitive wrong; but the play is known and repeated by heart; and it is a fact notorious to every one that there is no inſtance upon record of any thing which has ſo forcibly operated with the Engliſh nation to create a rooted averſion to tyranny as this very tragedy.

Having noticed the production of *Richard the Second*, and ſo extraordinary a play as *Richard the Third* in the ſame year, will it not appear aſtoniſhing that it ſhould alſo produce the firſt part of *Henry the Fourth;* a play, be it for character, ſituation, writing, conduct, or any other dramatic requiſite, that cannot be ſufficiently extolled. It is full of beautiful and rich nature from the beginning to the end; where, except in SHAKESPEAR, have met together ſo many characters, ſo correctly natural, ſo ſtrongly coloured, and ſo judiciouſly contraſted.

The bold, yet apprehenſive HENRY, who in plauſibly maintaining the crown he had uſurped, fancies that it totters on his head; his volatile ſon who ſeems to be the ſcourge of his father's crime, but who has native honour enough in the end to correct the levity and folly of the Prince of Wales in the dignity and honour of the King of ENGLAND and FRANCE; the noble natured HOTSPUR, meditating revenge againſt the man whom he had raiſed to a throne, and who ungratefully ſpurns thoſe offers of aſſiſtance he no longer needs, a ſerious leſſon to thoſe who even from the beſt motives ſupport a wrong cauſe; theſe, as ſtrong and warm written characters, have a high and meritorious title to admiration.

What then ſhall we ſay when we come to ſpeak

of FALSTAFF? the moſt inimitable character that ever was produced. Shall we any longer ſay that SHAKESPEAR could not have purſued the character of MERCUTIO? Let us ſtay and ſee whether that can be poſſibly be our opinion when we have followed the humourous knight through the braggart in this play, the moraliſt in the ſecond part of *Henry the Fourth*, the lover in the *Merry Wives of Windſor*, and the knave in them all. The wit of FALSTAFF, or rather the broad humour which contains ſomething better than wit, is ſo true, ſo ſtriking, ſo irreſiſtible, that the ſevereſt cynic muſt laugh and muſt approve.

The ſcrapes he lies him into, and afterwards lies himſelf out of, caſtigate the folly of lying by laughing at it to the higheſt pitch of perfection. But this humour, known ſo well by all, and ſo difficult to be deſcribed by any, is every where electrical from the two men in buckram, onward to the deſcription of the ragged regiment, and finiſhing by the giving HOTSPUR a new wound in his thigh.

NYM, and BARDOLPH, and POINS, are alſo admirably drawn; ſo is the HOSTESS. The incidents are perfectly probable and extremely natural and the quelling HOTSPUR's rebellion makes out, as a hiſtorical play, a very intereſting cataſtrophe.

The Merchant of Venice came out the following year, and moſt claims our attention; which the more we give it the more we ſhall have cauſe for admiration; for the characters are perfectly natural, and drawn in a maſterly manner, the writing is full of rare beauty and exquiſite truth, and the conduct is correct and judicious; for the virtue it protects is rewarded, and the rancour and revenge it expoſes are diſappointed and puniſhed.

The characters are drawn in the moſt glowing colours. The Jew is aſtoniſhingly bold and vivid. His turbulent and unſatisfied paſſions are thrown into a conflicted tumult in every way of which they are ſuſceptible, and it is difficult to ſay where they are beſt agitated; whether in the meditated revenge on ANTONIO and his crafty bargain, in the ſcene with TUBAL, chequered with alternate joy and vexation, or the trial, where his ſanguinary hopes are lifted to the higheſt climax of expectation, to be ſuddenly damped by diſappointment and diſmay.

PORTIA is moſt highly finiſhed. Generoſity, native dignity, and greatneſs of mind are every where conſiſtently ſeen in her, from the caſkets to the deciſion againſt SHYLOCK; and theſe qualities are brought forward through the medium of unaf-

fected ſprightlineſs, neat wit, and captivating eloquence. The other characters all rank reſpectably, but the judgment of the author is particularly conſpicuous in their gradually declining in conſequence, the better to bring forward PORTIA and the Jew.

The writing of this play is full of beauty and ſweetneſs, wit and humour, ſtrength and force. The caſket ſcene is charmingly written; ſo is the trial ſcene, in which the celebrated eulogium on mercy is ſo admirably introduced, ſtamping by a ſingle trait, as it happens ſo very frequently in SHAKESPEAR, the fame of a poet. Nor can we conceive any think ſweeter than the garden ſcene of LORENZO and JESSICA, in which the charms of muſic are ſo eloquently deſcribed; another ſtanding quotation.

The words uttered by the Jew are throughout the whole play aſtoniſhingly appropriate. It is one of thoſe many inſtances in SHAKESPEAR where every auditor, even of the meaneſt intellectual intelligence, becomes a correct critic and decides at once, that the character brought before him could not have ſaid any more, nor any thing elſe.

The comic part conſiſts of that playfulneſs in which SHAKESPEAR delighted to wanton, and relieves the intereſt at intervals throughout the piece,

from the ſprightly GRATIANO to the trifling GOBBOS; and thus the language is a natural and eaſy ſucceſſion of every thing that can intereſt, pleaſe, and divert.

As to the conduct of the Merchant of VENICE, we are willing not to look at it too critically, becauſe if we did we ſhould loſe much of our pleaſure. The cruelty of the Jew is a bold, and for the ſake of humanity let us hope an unnatural circumſtance, but it is ſurely poſſible; I don't argue particularly in a Jew, for we are actually told, how far truly I do not pretend to ſay, that it really happened in a chriſtian; but, true or falſe, natural or unnatural, if we agree to admit it, there is an end to objection.

It has alſo been complained of that time and place are violated, and that the proper moment for the cataſtrophe is at the end of the trial, and this laſt objection has ſome weight; but the conduct of this piece has one perfection which, perhaps, never was ſo happily wrought before nor ſince, I mean the union of the two ſtories; blended ſo conſiſtently and brought about ſo naturally, that the trifling error committed againſt time and place is much more than atoned for by this moſt judicious attention

to action. The unity SHAKESPEAR ſeldom violated, which is infinitely more material than both the others put together.

Though I could every where dwell on the ineſtimable value of SHAKESPEAR's writings; yet, as his pieces like thoſe of every other author are of courſe unequal, it gives me pleaſure to examine more minutely ſuch as are in the higheſt eſtimation, though any candidate for dramatic fame might be content to ſubſiſt his reputation on the gleanings.

As *All's Well that End's Well* was one of three, ſome ſay four, plays, of which the *Merchant of Venice* was the firſt that came out in the ſame year; it is not wonderful that it cannot rank with that admirable production. This, however, is in great meaſure owing to its unfortunate plot; the anſwer to which is, that SHAKESPEAR out to have choſen a better. There are, however, moſt charming paſſages in this play, and ſome ſtrong and highly wrought circumſtances. The character of PAROLLES, which ſeems to have ſupplied the hint for BOBADIL, is in our delightful poet's beſt ſtyle of humour; and from the mouth of HELEN we hear many of thoſe beautiful and faſcinating paſſages which, in him, ſpring from a ſource inexhauſtible.

Sir John Oldcaſtle is certainly not worthy to be ranked among the works of SHAKESPEAR, and it is with great propriety that it has been generally rejected. It has, however, evident marks in places of ſtrong and ſimilar genius, which might have ariſen from his having improved it; but even then they appear to be the ſhadow of his writing rather than the writing itſelf.

This ſeems to be ſtrongly confirmed by his bringing out in the ſame year *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth;* a play replete with wonderful writing. In this reſpect the character of FALSTAFF is even improved; for, though he is full of rich and luxurious humour in the former part of this ſubject, his obſervations here have a pointed and deep ſubtilty which ſeems to have been improved by keener and maturer obſervation. In ſhort, he is a thief in the firſt part, and a ſwindler in the ſecond. Characters that require very different qualifications, though they are the ſame in principle.

The ſituations alſo that he is thrown into are ſtronger and richer. The ſcene with DOLL TEARSHEET is highly wrought, ſo is that with SHALLOW and SILENCE, from his dry examination of the recruits, onward to his art in borrowing the thouſand

pounds, and at laſt his exſtacy at receiving from PISTOL the news of the king's death.

All the companions of FALSTAFF are alſo greatly heightened in this play, which is every where warm with incidents of the happieſt invention, and full of characters both intereſting and entertaining; ſhewing not more the fertility than the judgment with which SHAKESPEAR's aſtoniſhing mind was fraught, and through which he delineated the features of human nature at pleaſure.

In the following year came out *Henry the Fifth*, another wonderful production; but, indeed, every thing is wonderful in SHAKESPEAR. To recompence the auditor for the loſs of FALSTAFF, the author has introduced FLUELLEN, whoſe mixture of pride, quaintneſs, and courage, it is impoſſible not to reſpect, and laugh at. PISTOL is in this play a firſt rate part, and indeed all the characters and incidents in the comic part are in the trueſt vein of pleaſantry.

The volatile Prince, who has ripened into the prudent King, is a character of the moſt brilliant caſt. He is every where great, noble and admirable. Cautious, yet reſolved, before the fight; mo-

deſt and unaſſuming after it; ever the ſoldier, the man, and the philoſopher *. Much has been ſaid of the lines put into the mouth of the chorus, and in particular that they are unneceſſary; and one facetious gentleman has ſaid they prove that SHAKESPEAR new nothing of the ancient chorus. The anſwer to the firſt is, that theſe lines are ſome of thoſe unneceſſary good things which every man of taſte will rejoice that SHAKESPEAR thought proper to write, and to the other that he varied from the ancient chorus to improve upon it, for how could he be ignorant of what they inſiſt he attempted to imitate.

The *Puritan*, produced in 1600, ſtands exactly upon the ſame ground as *Sir John Oldcaſtle*, and whatever hand SHAKESPEAR might have had in it, as it is far from a bad play, he very probably left it unfiniſhed from his impatience to work at the two admirable productions that followed.

Much Ado about Nothing came out in the ſame

* Upon the whole this piece creates ſo much real intereſt, that it proved, upon ſtanding the teſt, the moſt attractive of SHAKESPEAR'S hiſtorical plays. This was confirmed when RICH brought forward the *Coronation*, at which time *Henry the Fifth* was performed at leaſt three times oftener than any other given play proper to introduce that ſpectacle.

year. This play is ſo witty, ſo playful, ſo abundant in ſtrong writing, and rich humour, that it has always attracted univerſal applauſe. The beauties it contains are innumerable, they are a cluſter, and are ſet ſo thick that they ſcarcely afford one another relief, and yet the beſt critic would find it difficult to ſay which of them ought to be diſplaced.

BENEDICK and BEATRICE, have created the leading characters in fifty comedies, and yet have never been excelled, not even by CONGREVE. Their friendly ſparring conſiſts of that extemporaneous repartee, which is better than wit, becauſe it is not ſtudied, and better than humour becauſe it is not groſs. In ſhort what was genuine in SHAKESPEAR by others has only been imitated, and there is one circumſtance relative to theſe characters which boaſts conſiderable pre-eminence, becauſe all this wit, while its imitations have been introduced in general only to add a livelineſs to the ſcene, is here the very pith and marrow of the plot, for it is the vehicle through which BENEDICK and BEATRICE, who had ſeparately ſworn to live ſingle, are actually made to fall in love with each other.

The critics, however, who cannot help nibbling, have endeavoured to repreſent this wit are too licen-

tious in BENEDICK, and too light in BEATRICE. In their ſqueamiſh conſcientiouſneſs, however, they forget that when the rein is thrown over the neck of wit it will be playful; but, ſo it be not vicious, its curvettings ought to be pardoned. In the preſent caſe ſo little is there of vice in the pleaſantries of BENEDICK and BEATRICE, that they exhibit as exalted a picture of every quality that can conſtitute honour, generoſity, and the noble nature of love and friendſhip, as, perhaps, the records of literature can furniſh.

There is not ſimply converſation in theſe characters, there is action; the beſt action: that which is intended to ſerve truth and recommend morality. BEATRICE's friendſhip to her couſin, and BENEDICK's challenging CLAUDIO, are among the grandeſt and nobleſt incidents the dramatic art has to boaſt of. The circumſtance of laying the ſame trap both for BENEDICK and BEATRICE has been cenſured with ſome colour of truth, but it is materially varied, and after all not worth a ſingle cavil.

All the circumſtances of the plot have relation to one another. Even DOGBERRY and his watch, whoſe natural humour ariſes from an affectation of uſing phraſes he does not underſtand, which has

been played upon by ſo many authors from that time to this, are abſolutely neceſſary in the conſtruction of the piece; for without them DON JOHN's plot could not have been defeated. In ſhort this comedy diſplays a fund of beauty which has never failed to give unceaſing delight to all ranks of auditors; and if it has faults, ſo has nature, to whom SHAKESPEAR was ſo faithful, and in whom the notable critics, if they took it in their heads, would undertake to diſcover as many imperfections as they have affected to find in her favourite.

As You Like It, produced in the ſame year, differs at all points, except general merit, from *Much ado about Nothing*. It is as full of wit, of beauty, of ſweetneſs, and of moral, but the ſtyle of the characters, the conveyance of the matter, and the ſcene of action are the difference, and ſerve to ſhew that SHAKESPEAR could create intereſt, with equal facility, in a court or a foreſt.

As You Like It boaſts one unrivalled merit, for it is a model for dramatic paſtorals, and in vain do we place by the ſide of it the beſt productions of TASSO and GUARINI. This gives the wit, with all its brilliancy, a melancholy and grave air; for it does not conſiſt of ſallies in conſequence of reflections in manners that actually paſs before you,

but rather of moralizing on thoſe which have paſſed, and from which you are diſtant both as to time and place.

To the reputation of an author, therefore, I know not if this ſpecies of writing be not the truer advantage. There appears to be more mind and more effort in producing it, not, however, in SHAKESPEAR, for his writings ſeem every where to have produced themſelves, the ſenſible and ſtrong obſervation in the ſweet prattle of ROSALIND, the beauty and good ſenſe in the reflexions of JAQUES, and the dry humour and true honeſty in the faithful TOUCHSTONE, could not have been ſhewn to advantage in any other ſituations.

How many paſſages in this play are known by heart and conſidered of that memorable deſcription that I have had ſuch frequent occaſion to notice. Quotations from the mouths of ROSALIND, and TOUCHSTONE, are in the recollection of every one, and that celebrated ſpeech, known by the name of *Shakeſpear's Seven Ages*, has been, time out of mind, bawled by men, and liſped by children.

As to the plot of the play, it has by ſome been conſidered as romantic, but this certainly conſtitutes

its eſſence; for without it we ſhould loſe the heroic friendſhip of CÆLIA, and the blunt fidelity of TOUSHSTONE; beſides, if the characters are thrown into extraordinary ſituations, it has not ariſen from choice but compulſion, and, therefore, they do not enjoy fanciful pleaſure abſurdly choſen by themſelves, they make the beſt of their unfortunate ſituations, and endeavour to turn that trouble that has been forced upon them into pleaſure.

In this light, nothing can be more intereſting nor affecting than the plot of *As You Like It.* The very circumſtance of the ladies ſo ſuddenly giving away their hearts, which doctor JOHNSON does not ſeem to approve, is by no means for ſuch a plot improper. They want protectors. Beſides there is a parity in the fortunes of ORLANDO and ROSALIND, that begets a very natural ſympathy, and renders the incident beautiful and affecting. I will agree, however, with the doctor that it would have been a moſt admirable advantage to literature if SHAKESPEAR had taken an opportunity of exerting his extraordinary powers by writing a ſcene between the Hermit and the Uſurper.

The next play we ſhall have to examine will be *The Merry Wives of Windſor*, which came out in 1601. This piece, take it as fair unadulterated na-

ture; conſiſting exactly of the very materials which conſtitute the beſt ſpecies of true comedy, muſt be ſo pronounced at leaſt equal to any thing in the Engliſh language. Such a variety of characters, all true unexaggerated nature, without quaintneſs, without affectation, ſpeaking in the manner and to the very letter of real life, every one as neceſſary to the plot as the various compartments of a building, juſt in proportion, eſſential in utility, never better united together.

The plot is natural, ſimple, and intereſting; and, though an *epiſode* grows out of it which begets much perplexity and true legitimate *equivoque*, nothing, from firſt to laſt can be more perſpicuous. Jealouſy has never been ſo ſtrongly depicted, nor ſo happily expoſed to ridicule. The very blindneſs of FORD in being gulled out of his money and his ſenſes by FALSTAFF, is in the happieſt extreme of true comedy; and though we have ſeen complaints that the ſituations of the ſcenes might be tranſpoſed, and that the play might have been ended almoſt at any part of it, yet it is impoſſible to ſay that this could have been done with effect, becauſe the repetition of the ſuppoſed provocation is the very paroxyſm in which the fever finds a cure for itſelf; for otherwiſe, in SHAKESPEAR'S own

words in another place, it would but "skin and "film the ulcerous part."

We have also been told of FORD's absurdity in considering FALSTAFF as an object of jealousy; but who that knows the blindness of that passion will not consider this as the cunning of the scene. Mrs. FORD's ground is secure. She places a confidence in a valuable and approving friend, and the more loosely her conduct appears to her husband the stronger is sure to be his remorse when he finds an amiable wife has condescended to go such lengths to cure him of his ungrateful suspicions.

As to the episode, in which all the subordinate characters are concerned, it is strongly interwoven with all the main design and the incidents that grow out of it are truly pleasant and at the same time hold out a wholesome moral.

As to the characters, the most prominent of course is FALSTAFF; though there is no saying for the utility in their situations to which to give the preference. FALSTAFF is most happily hit, even in the difficult light in which he is placed. We are told that queen ELIZABETH commanded SHAKESPEAR to make FALSTAFF in love. It has been

well obſerved by doctor JOHNSON that "a man "does not with great facility write to the ideas of "another, and that love was not in FALSTAFF's na- "ture." SHAKESPEAR has, however, from his groſs vanity, from his avarice, from his cunning, conjured up ſomething much better than love in FALSTAFF, for he has made him fancy Mrs. FORD in love with him, which is truer comedy. This, his abuſe of what he fancies confidence in her, and his adminiſtering to the pleaſure of FORD under the name of BROOK, employ all the paſſions proper to FALSTAFF, and at laſt make him the groſſeſt dupe in his own plot.

This is the very eſſence of comedy; and, as it ſerves to throw FALSTAFF into all thoſe ſituations which call forth his peculiar humour, may be conſidered in a moſt felicitous light. Who can reſiſt the deſcription of his being ſouſed in the THAMES. His reading the letter, and various other circumſtances. His luſcious ideas, his voluptuous mind, his ſenſual paſſions are all diſplayed in the higheſt colouring, which ſhews in a moſt extraordinary manner the wonderful reſources that were to be met with in the genius of SHAKESPEAR.

FORD is a jealous character diſtinctly different

from any other in SHAKESPEAR, OTHELLO is provoked to by a villain, and from the conſciouſneſs of his own unworthineſs, IACHIMO from abſence and fictitious teſtimony, TROILUS from a conviction that his wife was a wanton, and the reſt from other motives; but FORD is jealous through pride and from a belief that a moſt unworthy object is preferred to him. This, as there is nothing ſo mean as jealouſy, though nothing ſo much to be pitied, puts him upon ſhifts which make him almoſt as contemptible as his rivial; and, under the tricks played him by the merry wives, as they are called, perfectly laudable; whereas, were there not this ſtrong provocation, Mr. FORD's conduct would be reprehenſible, if not unpardonable. In ſhort, SHAKESPEAR knew that this was the only ſpecies of jealouſy that could poſſibly be laughed at, and, therefore, with that knowledge of human nature that has every where diſtinguiſhed him, he has made it the ground work of ſo entertaining and laudable a plot, that no portrait of jealouſy has ſince been drawn but this comedy has ſitten for ſome of the features.

I could with great pleaſure go over the particular merits of the other characters, they are ſo various, and ſo admirable; but it would only be deſcribing

what every body knows, both in their own forms and in the imitations of them that have pervaded ſo many other productions*, I ſhall, therefore, apologize for every word I have written on the ſubject of this admirable play, becauſe every word, in truth, in reaſon, in public opinion, and in notoriety, is totally unneceſſary; ſo well does the heart know how to deſpiſe criticiſm where the auditor has only to hear and admire.

Henry the Eighth was alſo performed in 1601, and gives us another proof that there was nothing too mighty for the graſp of our poet's genius. This is the laſt of SHAKESPEAR's hiſtorical plays, and is evidently written in compliment to queen ELIZABETH. I cannot be of doctor JOHNSON's opinion

* It has been obſerved that SHAKESPEAR ſeems to have been original in characters that are particularly marked by foreign and provincial pronunciation, but that the merit of ſuch characters is in the actor and not in the writer. This is the ſtrangeſt of all aſſertions, and I ſhould not have noticed it had not the authority been reſpectable. The actor can do nothing if nothing is given him. Welchmen may ſputter, Iriſhmen ſpeak the brogue, and Frenchmen clip Engliſh to all eternity, but this is not enough, it is the wit and humour conveyed by this vehicle and not the vehicle itſelf that begets attention, and though I have often ſeen actors who can from their excellent merit make a little go a great way, I never yet ſaw one who could make a great deal out of nothing.

that the genius of SHAKESPEAR in this play comes in and goes out with KATHERINE, and that every other part may be eaſily conceived and eaſily written. The ſpecimen of the true and intereſting pathetic which SHAKESPEAR has given us in the character of KATHERINE is peculiarly admirable, and among the beſt efforts of his inimitable talents; but are WOLSEY and HENRY only common characters? Or are they what they have been univerſally allowed, ſtrong, powerful, and dramatic. Does BUCKINGHAM go for nothing? And are ſuch exquiſite lines as he utters when he is led to execution eaſily conceived? I wiſh they were, if for no other reaſon than that we might comprehend that ſecret of writing with which nature entruſted our delicious poet. But the lines, which in another place the doctor has applied to DRYDEN, "that in "a pointed ſentence more regard is commonly had "to the words than the thought," ſeem to hit him here particularly hard; but, as I mean hereafter to examine this gentleman as one of the critics of SHAKESPEAR, I ſhall content myſelf at preſent with ſaying that the world and doctor JOHNSON are of different opinions.

Cromwell is one of thoſe plays rejected as SHAKESPEAR's, and certainly with great reaſon, for it has upon the whole leſs of thoſe marks of his

genius and judgment than any of thoſe pieces that have been merely attributed to him. That he had ſome concern in it, however, cannot be doubted. The foot of HERCULES can belong only to HERCULES *.

Troilus and Creſſida, the laſt play SHAKESPEAR produced in the reign of ELIZABETH, came out in 1602. A great deal has been ſaid to prove that this was written after CHAPMAN produced his *Verſion of* HOMER, a fact by no means, however, ſubſtantiated, or, indeed, if it were, would it materially alter the queſtion, for SHAKESPEAR and CHAPMAN were not exactly of equal merit †.

SHAKESPEAR muſt ſome how certainly have read the hiſtory of the Trojan War, perhaps, from CAXTON, and became intimately acquainted with

* I ſhall anticipate a ridicule here which will be too obvious to eſcape witlings; who, conſidering this declaration as a defence of SHAKESPEAR, will be apt to ſay that with all my cautious care of his character I cannot help acknowledging that he put his foot in it, a circumſtance and expreſſion I ſhould diſdain to notice were it not to ſhew how eaſy it is to ridicule.

† I think it pretty nearly amounts to a proof that SHAKESPEAR knew the Trojan War before CHAPMAN's *Homer*, by many paſſages in his works. For one inſtance he makes PISTOL ſay, ſhall I Sir PANDARUS of TROY become?

the various qualities of the Grecian generals, for he has drawn their characters with full as much beauty and truth as HOMER, and one is apt to think that he only read the hiſtory and knew nothing of HOMER's particular manner of treating it; for, though the characters are the ſame, and may be known through the portraiture of both authors as likeneſſes, there is a dignity and a ſublimity in the manner of their expreſſing their ſentiments in this play, beyond any thing of that nature in the *Iliad*, and is ſo much better at any rate than a tranſlation, that without greciſms the characters are critically Greeks, a diſcrimination that SHAKESPEAR underſtood better than any author that ever lived.

As to the other merits of this play, they are various, but they are irregular and haſtily put together. CRESSIDA and PANDARUS are characters violently drawn, but they beget that ſovereign and ineffable deteſtation of vice which it is the peculiar duty of the dramatic poet to excite. The brutality of THERSITES is well thrown in to mortify the wanton CRESSIDA, and the conduct in ISOILUS's detection of her falſehood and wickedneſs is maſterly.

With this play I ſhall at preſent take leave of SHAKESPEAR to look after his cotemporaries; la-

menting my inability to do him juſtice except in my feelings and my wiſhes, yet grateful for an opportunity of expatiating on a theme which affords me the pleaſure of paying a tribute of reſpect, and admiration, to great, and extraordinary talents.

CHAP. V.

JONSON.

In the liſt of thoſe dramatic poets who were celebrated in the reigns of Elizabeth and James the Firſt, Jonson claims immediate rank after Shakespear; and it is but fair to ſay that the ſtrong ſenſe and ſober regularity of his writings were of infinite conſequence to thoſe other authors of that time, whoſe pens, unlike the pen of Shakespear, which never ventured in vain, required a maſterly criterion for their regulation, ſuch as Jonson knew how to ſet up.

Of this uſe was this ſchoolmaſter in literature, whoſe pupils very often would have run riot had he not held up the rod of criticiſm perpetually *in terrorem*. Not that Jonson did not know nature as well as erudition, for we have many ſtriking proofs in his dramatic writings that he did; but it was awk-

ward nature, dry nature, ſententious nature, nature in ſtilts and trammels; and, though faithful to truth as truth is to perfection, the proper proportion of amuſement and inſtruction was miſtaken, and the force of improvement was unfounded in that taſteleſs, and often nauſeous vehicle, through which it was meant to be conveyed.

It might be invidious to place JONSON by the ſide of SHAKESPEAR, becauſe the loſs to him in the compariſon would be infinite. It is indiſpenſible, however, to notice, becauſe it is a hiſtorical fact, that he had the experience of nine years, during which time SHAKESPEAR was licking the ſtage into form, before he brought forward a ſingle piece; and, this premiſed, whatever the world in general may think of the matter, SHAKESPEAR muſt have been the preceptor of JONSON.

We are told, indeed, that SHAKESPEAR foſtered him and his works, and with ſome difficulty ſo wrought his iron that at laſt it became maleable and aſſumed ſomething like form; and we are alſo told that he was very ungrateful in return for this kindneſs; which circumſtance, if true, carries with it a proof of that remark which may invariably be ventured, that genius is naturally allied to liberality, and pedantry to envy.

Indeed the whole life of JONSON ſeems to have been a ſeries of pride, meanneſs, ſourneſs, inſolence, and diſcontent *. Turbulence threw him into the army, reſtleſſneſs made him quit the army for the ſtage, brutality hurried him to take away the life of a fellow creature, and capriciouſneſs induced him to change his religion, all which circumſtances are mentioned, however, here only to corroborate what has been before aſſerted that the different features in the mind of the man often operate upon the labours of the writer.

JONSON was educated at Weſtminſter ſchool under the celebrated CAMDEN; but the narrow ideas of his father-in-law, who was a bricklayer, and who ſaw no further uſe for inſtruction than the level and the ſquare, induced him to take JONSON from that learning, which he is ſaid to have imbibed with great avidity, to teach him his own trade that he thought would build him a more ſolid fortune than the trade of poetry. The young gentleman, however, who had more taſte for building caſtles in the

* How arrogantly ungrateful was his meſſage to CHARLES the Firſt, who advanced him as poet laureat, and frequently loaded him with benefits; one of which, a hundred pounds, is acknowledged in an epigram. The king ſent him ten guineas upon hearing that he was poor. "His majeſty," ſaid JONSON to the bearer, "he ſent me "ten guineas becauſe I am poor and live in an alley. Tell him his "ſoul lives in an alley."

air than houſes upon terra firma, treated this intended kindneſs with great contempt, and, leaving his family, went into the army in FLANDERS.

The ſtudy of literature was more congenial to the feelings of JONSON than the ſtudy of military tactics. He, therefore, took an early opportunity of leaving the army and repaired to CAMBRIDGE, where it ſhould appear that he made no great ſtay, owing to the narrowneſs of his finances, for we ſoon find him an actor at the Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch. Here, following the ſteps of SHAKESPEAR, he tried his hand at writing plays, in which occupation, however, he appears, for a time, to have been unſucceſsful. At length he wrote *Every Man in his Humour*, a comedy beyond doubt of much ſterling excellence, and from that time his reputation began to be eſtabliſhed.

JONSON was perpetually ſquabbling with all mankind, and among the reſt with SHAKESPEAR; who, in his own words, might have replied with perfect indifference, "Till thou can'ſt rail the ſeal "from off the bond." Theſe, probably, might have been his ſentiments, for we do not find that he condeſcended to notice a ſlander that was born of ingratitude, and nurſed by envy. JONSON did

not every where, however, fare ſo well; for ſome of his malice drew on him a quarrel which finiſhed by his killing a man in a duel, for which he was impriſoned; but he procured his releaſe by changing his religion; and thus he exhibited that picture which, whatever merit it might have had, was not even in the leaſt degree like true genius, for it was wiſdom dreſſed like folly, knowledge hid by vanity, and talents obliterated by arrogance; preſenting at once a mind, powerful, mean, offenſive, overbearing, and accommodating.

The different pieces which JONSON produced amount to about fifty-three in number, beſides one or two which are attributed to him; but among theſe are only two tragedies, and ten comedies, the reſt being either maſques, or comic ſatires, or elſe ſketches written to ſerve ſome temporary purpoſe, and this ſtatement alone may ſerve to ſhew how completely the works of JONSON kick the beam when poiſed againſt thoſe of SHAKESPEAR.

Yet was his merit great and extenſive, and he ſhall be allowed it to the letter, for it is not in his want of ſufficient talents, for one man, that we diſcover the diſparity; it is in his rival's poſſeſſing the talents of twenty men.

As to tragedy, JONSON is abſolutely an Engliſh SENECA, but a much better writer. *Sejanus* has great virile ſtrength, and ſound ſterling merit; but it is heavy, dull, and declamatory, and leſt any ſchool boy ſhould be miſtaken as to its origin, the author has been honeſt enough to ſhew in what way he has quoted the ancients, even to ſetting down all his authorities; ſo that *The Fall of Sejanus*, whatever it may be as a prompt-book, cannot be denied the merit of an excellent ſchool-book.

The ſame faults pervade *Catiline*. The ſcenes are long, the ſpeeches are full of declamation, the action is retarded, and the audience muſt ſleep. Nevertheleſs it is full of all that merit which correct regularity and ſound erudition can give it; but ſtilts are uneaſy things, and the mind has no more objection to ſhake off weight than the ſhoulders *; and it is upon this account that, though every man who has a taſte for literature will find in theſe ſcenes much pleaſure on reflection, yet to read them a firſt time is an effort, a ſecond a taſk, and a third impoſſible †.

* This is ſomething like Dutch beauty, and puts me in mind of the man who wrote to his friend, to ſay that they had many fine women in HOLLAND, but that Madam SLANGHENBROE was handſomer than Mrs. VAN BREASTCUT by half a ton.

† The admirers of JONSON may anſwer this if they will in the

Some of the comedies of JONSON, however, have diſtinguiſhed merit. *Every Man in his Humour* is admirably conſtructed, well managed, and full of thoſe characters which are the propereſt objects of comedy. I will not invidiouſly ſay that the outline of many of the parts may eaſily be traced. *The Braggart*, *The Jealous Man*, *The Simpleton*, and *The Plain Dealer*, are fair and obvious game, and one poet has as great a right to purſue them as another. It muſt be confeſſed that KITELY and BOBOADIL in this play are maſterly characters, and the means taken to cure the folly of the one and and puniſh the cowardice of the other are well purſued.

The ſubordinate characters through a very natural epiſode in which they are themſelves concerned, contribute to bring about the cataſtrophe, in which neceſſary buſineſs the proteus BRAINWORM is very active. This rounds the conduct ſo artfully that no perſonage, even to COB and TIB,

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ſame manner as the orator did his friend. He entreated him to read a ſpeech he had compoſed and give him his opinion of it. "Why," ſaid the friend, "out of kindneſs to you I have read it three times." "Indeed," ſaid the other, "well, and how do you like it?" "Why," ſaid the friend, "the firſt time I found it admirable, the "ſecond but indifferent, and the third damnable." "Well never "mind it," ſaid the orator, "it will do, for it will only be heard "but once."

is foiſted in, but all contribute very poetically to aid the double plot.

Theſe are the merits of this play, to which, indeed, may be added the adroit manner in which JONSON has fitted a foreign ſubject to the Engliſh ſtage, for the original plot is Italian, which may very eaſily be diſcerned by the conduct of the intriguing BRAINWORM. As it is managed however here, nothing can be more vernacular than the humour, the manners, and the intrigue, and yet, with all theſe advantages, it has been with the utmoſt difficulty that this play has been able to keep its ground; nor would it ever have held a reputable ſituation on the ſtage had it not been occaſionally revived through a union of uncommon talents.

The reaſon of this is obvious. Perfect wit and chaſte humour, as they are called, may be natural but they cannot be general, and nothing but what is general can univerſally pleaſe. The public do not want an author to write a play as if every ſentence obnoxious to criticiſm was a wound in his reputation; they would rather that he greatly ſucceeded in places even though he ſometimes relaxed; and why? Becauſe this is human nature, of which a a play ought to be the faithful repreſentative; and it is on this account that the hard, dry, though natural humour of JONSON, and the refined and po-

liſhed wit of CONGREVE, though they beget particular admiration, never attract general applauſe.

Every Man out of his Humour is a chimerical inſtance of JONSON's eccentricity as a playwright. It has in it ſome admirable writing, and the characters are well drawn, but it is conveyed to the audience through the medium of a grex, or ſet of ſuppoſed auditors, who ſit on the ſtage and explain what if it were properly written ought to explain itſelf. By this means the perſonages ſmack of the old moralities and become paſſions rather than characters; and thus JONSON, inſtead of bringing the ſtage forward has rather endeavoured to throw it behind hand, and given one proof among many that, though he has much merit of every deſcription, yet it conſiſts rather of diſtracted and ſeparate parts, than a ſober and harmonious whole.

As *Sejanus* and theſe two comedies were all the dramatic pieces, except ſome of his maſques, that JONSON produced before the reign of JAMES the firſt, by which time SHAKESPEAR had brought out twenty-four regular plays, I ſhall defer any farther mention of this author till I have brought his cotemporaries up to that period and given a general account of the ſtage itſelf and every regulation concerning it.

CHAP. VI.

CHAPMAN, THOMAS HEYWOOD, MARLOE, AND OTHERS.

CHAPMAN in his way was a moſt extraordinary character. I ſhall not in relation to this author or any other exhibit any particular anxiety as to the town where he firſt drew his breath, the college that boaſted the honour of his education, or any other of thoſe adventitious circumſtances which by ſome biographers are conſidered of much greater moment than whether they credited the place of their birth, or the ſeminary where they were educated.

CHAPMAN, whoever were his anceſtors, or wherever he was born, was a great credit to literature, as far as correct claſſical knowledge can render an author celebrated. He was born ſeven years before SHAKESPEAR; and began, as a ſcholar, to be in full reputation very early in life. His firſt

play, however, did not make its appearance till the very year JONSON brought out *Every Man in his Humour;* therefore I can only notice in this place that, which was called *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, and another produced the following year, under the title of *The Humorous Day's Mirth*, as the third dramatic effort of this author did not make its appearance till two years after the death of ELIZABETH.

I ſhall, however, before I ſpeak of his plays, claim a right to mention CHAPMAN generally as an author; and it is not becauſe I have in another place inſiſted that he is greatly inferior to SHAKESPEAR, for indeed who is not, that I am to afford him only a niggardly portion of praiſe; for he was a formidable rival to JONSON, who took him by the hand as a friend, the more ſecurely to do him every poſſible kind of injury *.

* One inſtance of this is apparent in the play of *Eaſtward Hoe*, which was thought when it came forward to be the ſole production of CHAPMAN. JONSON, however, is known to have aſſiſted him in it and to have introduced ſome ſarcaſtic paſſages againſt the Scots; which, operating, as he wiſhed and expected, upon JAMES, produced the downfall of CHAPMAN at court, where he had great expectations through the influence of the Prince of WALES, and the Earl of SOMERSET. Nor had he any opportunity of reinſtating himſelf through any explanation, for the Prince ſoon after died, and the Earl was diſgraced.

CHAPMAN was certainly both a correct and an elegant ſcholar. His manners were poliſhed, he enjoyed the countenance and protection of the great, and was the intimate friend of men of the moſt finiſhed wit and ingenuity of that time. His plays have conſiderable merit, and ſome of his other works are by no means a draw back on his fame; but his beſt efforts are his tranſlations, particularly thoſe from HOMER, which were a great help at that period to erudition.

The two comedies, that regularly fall under our notice in this place, are the moſt indifferent of this author's works; being neither divided into acts, nor having any regular dramatic conſtruction. The utmoſt therefore, that can be ſaid of them is that they bore marks of genius and nature in the writing, and gave expectation of better productions which were to follow.

THOMAS HEYWOOD who has been already mentioned, and who like, his cotemporaries, HARDY in France, and LOPEZ de VEGA in Spain, ſeems to have derived all his merit from the number inſtead of the quality of his dramatic works, demands ſome mention here, though no more than two of his plays, at

leaſt that we know of, appeared during the life of ELIZABETH.

This man, by ſome of the biographers, has been greatly extolled as a writer without any great appearance, however, of either truth or juſtice; for the prodigious quantity he wrote, for which he ranſacked the ancients without mercy, whatever might have been his real merit had he taken time to correct and poliſh his works, rendered it impoſſible for him to turn any thing out of hand likely to ſecure him a ſolid reputation; and thus we have a liſt of twenty-four pieces, out of two hundred and twenty which he himſelf ſays he either wrote or was concerned in, little more known at this moment than by their titles.

HEYWOOD was certainly a good claſſical ſcholar, and as an actor he was pretty celebrated. Indeed the purſuing this occupation, and his being perpetually in company, for we are ridiculouſly told that he wrote his plays upon the backs of tavern bills, muſt have left him but little opportunity to complete the difficult taſk of writing plays, eſpecially ſuch an immenſe number as are attributed to him.

MARLOE who brought out his firſt play in 1590,

probably for the reaſons before given, the very year when SHAKESPEAR alſo produced his firſt piece, was celebrated as an actor and well eſteemed as a writer. HEYWOOD calls him the beſt of poets, not recollecting, perhaps, that SHAKESPEAR was in exiſtence. He deſervedly, however, poſſeſſed conſiderable reputation; and, with all the ponderous merit of JONSON's tragedy writing, I ſhould rather think the efforts of MARLOE, either in themſelves or the aſſiſtance they have afforded to others will have a longer and a better claim to the approbation of the public than thoſe of the theatrical lawgiver.

MARLOE wrote no comedy, and his two tragedies of *Tamberlane the Great*, and his *Edward the Second*, are all that properly came before us here. The latter, however, did not make its appearance till 1598, during which lapſe, as SHAKESPEAR brought out ſeven hiſtorical plays, he clearly made it his ſtudy to derive every poſſible advantage from ſo advantageous a circumſtance, and it muſt be confeſſed that *Edward the Second* is by no means a bad play. The ſubject is well choſen, and the piece diſplays the troubleſome events of that monarch's reign, particularly the fall of GAVESTON in very lively colours.

MARLOE would very probably have enſured to

himself a much greater degree of reputation had he not been led away by GEORGE PEELE and that set already spoken of, who gave into all manner of licentiousness, and were little better than atheists. The weakness of MARLOE's mind made him a prey to the folly and wickedness of these abominable doctrines; and, in his profligate moments, he wrote several tracts, the manifest drift of which was to prove our SAVIOUR an impostor, and to shew that the scriptures were full of idle stories, and that religion was only policy and priestcraft.

These paroxysms of folly have prevailed on certain restless individuals in all ages, and have constantly excited some curiosity from their novelty, and as constantly dwindled into just contempt and execration. It seems to have proceeded in MARLOE from fits of drunken phrenzy; for, in one of these he attempted to kill a footman whom he suspected of having been too kindly received by one of his dulcineas, when the man in self defence diverted the direction of the weapon; which, entering into MARLOE's head, killed him upon the spot.

This sudden death was considered as a judgment from Heaven for his impiety, and those who had before the weakness to admire his writings, going to the opposite extreme, now abhorred him and blamed themselves for their wickedness and credulity.

MARSTON, who wrote two plays during the reign of ELIZABETH, was conſidered as an eminent poet. His particular merit was the purity and elegance of his ſtyle, in which he carefully ſhunned all kind of ribaldry, groſſneſs and obſcenity; ſo much ſo, ſays an author, that "whatſoever even in the "ſpring of his years he preſented upon the private "and public theatre, in his autumn and declining "age he needed not to be aſhamed of."

He had, however, more merit than this which would be pretty evident, had we not the teſtimony of his writings, from the boiling envy it excited in JONSON; who, peaceable as MARSTON was, drew on himſelf, by his repeatedly provoking conduct, a large ſhare of that poet's literary caſtigation. They were a long time friends, and MARSTON dedicated his play of the *Malcontent* to JONSON in warm and handſome terms. Envious, however, of his riſing fame, as we have ſeen in the caſe of CHAPMAN, and which was the caſe indeed with moſt of his cotemporaries, JONSON ſoon forfeited all pretenſions to friendſhip, and violently broke through every tie of honour and gratitude; holding up the man who loaded him with careſſes to contempt and ridicule.

MARSTON provoked to the uttermoſt retorted upon JONSON; and, in his epiſtle prefixed to his

tragedy of *Sophoniſba*, moſt ſucceſsfully ridiculed the pedantic foppery in his works, and detected thoſe thefts from the ancients with which he had ſtuffed *Sejanus and Catiline.* MARSTON produced eight plays, which are now, indeed, but little known, but ſome of them have ſerved as the ground work for the writings of ſucceeding authors.

DECKER, another poet, for a time in friendſhip with JONSON, and afterwards moſt ſeverely ſatirized by that drawcanſir in literature, produced two plays before the reign of JAMES. What was the particular cauſe of the quarrel cannot now be known, but it is univerſally agreed that JONSON's envy and rancour, not being able to bear a rival near the throne, was its origin. We may collect a very faithful idea of it from the diſpute between POPE and CIBBER; which, having originated in rancour on the ſide of POPE, every ſtroke he aimed at his adverſary recoiled upon himſelf.

In JONSON's *Poetaſter*, the *Dunciad* of that time, DECKER, under the title of CRISPINUS, is moſt ſeverely handled. This literary hawk, however, ſo very fond of annoying ſmall birds, had better, in this inſtance, have ſoared on without having attempted to pounce upon DECKER; for, as it happens with other hawks, that the very ſparrows, who

are afraid of them on the ground, attack them ſucceſsfully in the open air; ſo the light and agile DECKER, pegged away at the clumſy and unweildy JONSON, to ſo good a purpoſe, that he not only made his feathers fly but he galled him all over.

This he effected by writing a play called the *Satyromaſtix; or the untruſſing the humerous Poet.* Here, under the name of young HORACE, he has made JONSON the hero of the piece. The public were charmed with the circumſtance, and the play did wonders. Nay this was the foundation of DECKER's reputation, whoſe writings were certainly not of the firſt rate kind, yet, after his pride had been rouſed by the favourable turn this controverſy took, he made up by aſſiduity what he wanted in talents, and, having become a good judge of dramatic effect, he enjoyed a conſiderable degree of reputable ſucceſs.

Old Fortunatus, which, perhaps, originally rouſed the hornet JONSON, for, extravagant as the ſtory is the piece has great merit, and *Satyromaſtix* are all the plays of this author that come under our notice here. He wrote ſingly eight others, ſeveral in conjunction with WEBSTER, DAY, and other poets, and three or four beſides are attributed to him.

To MIDDLETON very little more has been attributed but that he wrote in conjunction at times with JONSON, FLETCHER, MASSINGER, and others; and this has been quoted as a proof that he could not be deſtitute of merit. A better proof, however, are his own plays, ſome of which are now in print, and well known; among theſe are *A Mad World my Maſters*, *The Mayor of Queenborough*, &c. and they rank his reputation about upon a par with DECKER'S.

From the production of SHAKESPEAR'S firſt play to the death of queen ELIZABETH, who, it ſhould be mentioned tranſlated one of the tragedies of EURIPIDES, few known authors, except thoſe here enumerated, wrote for the ſtage. EEDES is ſaid to have written ſeveral plays but we know not even their titles. We are told that he wrote them in his youth, that they were moſtly tragedies, and that, becoming in maturer years, a grave divine, a prebendary and chaplain to the queen, he ſtuck altogether to the duties of his profeſſion, and, perhaps, upon this account he would not ſuffer his plays to be publiſhed.

YARRINGTON wrote one play, ſo did PORTER, ſo did BRANDON, and BERNARD tranſlated the co-

medies of TERENCE. Beſides theſe there were about thirty plays written by anonymous authors, ſo that during a period of fourteen years more than ſeventy plays were produced, only forty of them legitimately owned, and, out of thoſe forty, twenty-five were certainly from the pen of SHAKESPEAR, and four others were attributed to him.

It will be ſeen by this what complete poſſeſſion he had of the ſtage during the latter end of ELIZABETH's reign, and that in the ſhort period of fourteen years he brought it to a degree of perfection, beyond which it has not ſince gone, nor can it ever go. I ſhall now, by a review of the playhouſes and and actors, ſhew the prodigious diſadvantages under which all this arduous taſk was attempted, and in ſpight of which it was ſo completely accompliſhed.

CHAP VI.

PLAY HOUSES AND ACTORS.

We have already ſeen that noblemen retained players in their ſervice, and that no others were regularly tolerated, but that even this was not ſufficient to reſtrain their licentiouſneſs, and, therefore, in 1589, the year in which Shakespear is ſaid to have produced his firſt play, a circumſtance on this very account highly improbable, players were altogether ſilenced till further notice.

Whether the influence of Shakespear revoked this mandate very ſuddenly or not, it will be difficult to ſay. It is certain, however, that his firſt play reduced the theatrical ſtate to ſuch order that playhouſes began from that moment to multiply, and we find that, during the life time of this extraordinary man, no fewer than ſeventeen were known; among theſe were St. Paul's ſinging ſchool, the Globe on the Bankſide. Southwark, the Swan, the Hope, both alſo in Southwark, the Fortune, between White Croſs

Street and Golden Lane, the Red Bull in St. John's Street, the Croſs Keys in Grace Church Street, the Tuns, the Theatre, the Curtain, the Nurſery in Barbican, the Playhouſe in Blackfriars, the Playhouſe in Whitefriars, the Playhouſe in Saliſbury Court, the Cock Pit, and the Phœnix.

We have here only ſixteen. It is inſiſted upon, however, that there was another, a matter, however, of no great moment, nor ought we to underſtand that, though all theſe were built during the life time of SHAKESPEAR, they were, therefore, built on his account, for the Fortune, the Theatre, and the Curtain, were erected between 1570 and 1580; the Fortune, according to ſeveral writers, being the firſt regular Engliſh theatre, though it is much more probable to ſuppoſe it was the Theatre, from its name, which ſeems to ſuppoſe that it was the only theatre.

The term regular theatre uſed here is vague enough, for theatres could not be called regular till they had ſcenes, an advantage none of theſe boaſted; though there cannot be a doubt but they had at times ſome ſort of decorations, for theſe, even at the time of the Myſteries, are particularly deſcribed to us, and as to the Maſques, which were performed at public weddings, and at court, there is no doubt

but the firſt architects and painters were employed to decorate them.

It is, however, certain that matted walls, or tapeſtry at beſt, were all the decorations then of the theatre, and theſe the audience were to fancy gardens, towns, palaces, or whatever elſe the poet might think proper; beſides which the performances were by day light, another draw-back on ſtage effect, the neceſſary deception of which was, of courſe, by this circumſtance materially injured.

But the grand diſadvantage, which muſt have been a conſiderable check to the genius of SHAKESPEAR, was that women's characters were performed by men. It is evident that from this circumſtance he kept many of his female-characters in the back ground, and even the performance of thoſe which, from their conſequence in the piece, were obliged to be prominent, muſt have been neceſſarily inferior to what they would have been had they been repreſented by women.

It will be ſaid that this objection holds good as to other authors as well as to SHAKESPEAR, and this is true; but, when in juſtice we are obliged to allow his great ſuperiority in point of merit, it will

operate on that very account in a much ſtronger degree to his diſadvantage than any other.

The public were certainly glad enough to take things as they found them, and the rage muſt have been very high indeed at that time for dramatic entertainments when ſo many theatres, ſo ill furniſhed with every requiſite but good plays, could find means to exiſt.

As to actors, they muſt have been numerous indeed, and, upon conſideration, we cannot help crediting they were performers of merit; for, as they, as well as the authors, muſt have found their diſadvantages in rafters for ornamented ceilings, plaſtered walls for woods, rocks, and palaces, and ſometimes neither ceilings nor walls at all, for in the Inn-yards they performed in the open air; there muſt certainly have been a great deal of the true Roſcian ſtuff about the Engliſh actors at that time, for the leſs they had to help them out, the more they had to deſcribe.

This merit will be the more eaſily allowed when we recollect that the Engliſh authors, like the Grecian, were alſo actors; and that SHAKESPEAR, JONSON, MARSTON, and MARLOE, enforced the effect of their writings by perſonating thoſe characters

they delineated. We know not their exact merits upon the ſtage, and we have been told, by way of detraction, that SHAKESPEAR never attained a higher rank than the performance of the Ghoſt in his own *Hamlet*, and this may be a very good argument with thoſe who eſtimate parts by their length. I have ſeen GARRICK perform the Ghoſt in *Hamlet*, and I ſhould not think it an unfair argument to ſuppoſe had GARRICK's merit preponderated on the ſide of his writing, which poſterity may know, inſtead of his acting which it cannot, that this very circumſtance would be cited to prove the Engliſh Roscius a very mediocre actor; ſo careful are we before we allow men too much merit.

This conſideration does not weigh a feather in the argument. I cannot ſay that SHAKESPEAR was a capital actor, nor can any one demonſtrate to me that he was a bad one. His leſſon to the players in *Hamlet* ſhews pretty clearly that he knew what acting was; and it is not very likely that he would be either ſo ignorant or ſo vain as unconſciouſly to write in this leſſon a ſatire againſt himſelf. At any rate it is impoſſible but that the aſſiſtance of the writers themſelves muſt have added material weight to the celebrity of their pieces; and really one cannot but be charmed, even in the acting of the preſent day, admirable as it is ſuppoſed to be, when one ſees now

and then a gleam of ſenſe labouring to make its way through a "congregation of vapours," by means of which film authors are miſrepreſented, nature tortured into every ſhape but her own, and eaſe and ſimplicity diſtorted into affectation and caricature.

It will not be eaſily credited, as theſe authors were alſo actors, that the profeſſion of a dramatic performer was not in great eſtimation at that time; nay, it is not clear to me but that it was then in much greater repute than it is now, or ever will be again; and the reaſon is there was more gratitude in the treatment they received, and a higher admiration of men that the public conſidered in poſſeſſion of talents ſuperior to their own.

On this account, as it has often happened in other countries, men of the firſt abilities, and in the higheſt ſituations, did not diſdain to become actors; for no tolerated profeſſion is diſgraceful unleſs the members themſelves diſgrace it. Thoſe of this deſcription who had talents themſelves, readily embraced it, thoſe who had not readily encouraged talents in others. Sir THOMAS MORE did not diſdain to turn actor, ſo little did he fear that the diſrepute of the profeſſion could injure the morality of the man; and TARLETON, who was really a licentious character, was, nevertheleſs, on account of his merit

admired, and even honoured, till his profligacy ſhut him out of that ſociety exactly as it muſt have done out of any other.

There is another reaſon why the actors of that time muſt have been deſervedly celebrated. Good writeing requires good acting; and when have we witneſſed ſuch good writing as that of SHAKESPEAR? In him we have come to the perfection of the art. Have we had any thing ſince that demands the exertion neceſſary for the performance of RICHARD, LEAR, HAMLET, OTHELLO, MACBETH, and many other parts that the reader will point out to me? Do not nineteen out of twenty actors chuſe a character for their firſt appearance from SHAKESPEAR? Why? Becauſe the merit of the author aſſiſts the reputation of the actor, and thus we are obliged to go back to the matter of that time before we can ſhew what the exertions of actors at that time required.

We are told by various writers, decidedly, and without reſerve, that acting has gradually declined from the time of SHAKESPEAR, and that the art is loſt. BURBAGE, who was the original RICHARD the third, LOWIN the firſt HAMLET, and HENRY the eighth, and KEMPE, who was inimitable in the Clowns, are poſitively ſaid to have as much ſurpaſſed

HART, LACY, MOHUN, SHATTERAL, and CLUN, who ſucceeded, as they did BETTERTON, and that ſet.

If this be true, which, however, it is extremely difficult to vouch, the merit of an actor muſt have been ſuppoſed to conſiſt at that time of all the force and power neceſſary to be aſſumed, in order to give effect to the repreſentation of great characters, unaſſiſted by thoſe decorations which now frequently attract the public without acting at all; and, this admitted, it was the acting of ROSCIUS, of ÆSOP, of thoſe Mimes, of whoſe action alone we are told ſuch prodigious things.

In this caſe the Engliſh ſtage poſſeſſed the beſt merit of the Grecian, and the beſt merit of the Roman; for it was ſupported by actors of both ſorts. SHAKESPEAR and the other authors gave to acting a Grecian poliſh, following the ſteps of ÆSCHYLUS, and BURBAGE, LOWIN, and the reſt, made it a profeſſion ſingly, and emulated the Roman perfection of ROSCIUS and ÆSOP.

Beſides theſe, as ſo many theatres exiſted at that time, the number of actors muſt have been immenſe; but, as a minute enquiry into this would lead

us only into conjecture, for, though a lamentable, one it is a certain fact that poſterity cares but little for that merit which does not ſubſtantiate itſelf, I ſhall leave this ſubject till it can be better elucidated by a deſcription of thoſe plays and their repreſentation which to an aſtoniſhing number did great credit to the reign of JAMES the firſt during the life of SHAKESPEAR.

CHAP. VIII.

STATE OF LITERATURE AT THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH.

As it always happens that, while improvement in any one ſtudy is going forward, a ſenſible ſympathy is felt in all the collateral parts, ſo it will be found in the preſent inſtance that, while SHAKESPEAR was improving the ſtage, the relative arts were every where verging nearer to perfection.

Poetry, painting, and muſic, in the reign of ELIZABETH, began as if by general conſent to throw off barbariſm; and, though their various merits manifeſted themſelves in different parts of EUROPE, the general effect was electric; and while the Muſes ſeparately choſe reſidences, the influence of all was diffuſed from people to people.

ITALY, however, was the IDA. There the arts which had been foſtered under the auſpices of LEO the tenth, now began to gain decided pre-eminence.

Painting, however, which had reached to a ſublime height, and muſic which had acquired poliſh and refinement, ſeemed to keep their ground firmer than the ſtand made by literature; which, after the wonderful TASSO, and the charming GUARINI, yielded to the influence of the ſplendid talents and great genius poſſeſſed by poets of other nations.

The Spaniards, with CERVANTES at their head, began to grow very conſpicuous in literature. MALHERBE about this time taught the French how to write poetry, MAMBRUN gave their language every poliſh that it could require from critical and grammatical excellence, and theſe poets, MALHERBE in particular, ſtampt a regulation and a criterion which overcame all the gothic barbariſm into which French erudition had been plunged, and refined it into that elegance and neat point for which it has been ſince ſo juſtly celebrated.

Engliſh erudition, at no time calculated for that which is light and ſuperficial, but always for that which is ſolid and true, had imbibed nothing more of Italian flight, of French point, of Spaniſh ſarcaſm than ſerved the purpoſe of enforcing the neceſſary end to which the argument in queſtion tended. Imagery it had wide and comprehenſive as the imaginations that produced it, but the flowers were not

born to decay, but to illuſtrate truth and picture nature by the beauty of their colouring, and the ſweetneſs of their odour.

Should any one doubt this, let him range with SPENCER's *Fairy Queen* through all the wilds of fancy, the labyrinths of allegory, and the mazes of enchantment; and, as each new flight of imagination ſurprizes him into wonder and aſtoniſhment, let it alſo convince him into virtue and truth.

There would be no more difficulty by a review of the *Shepherd's Calender* to pronounce SPENCER a ſuperior paſtoral poet to GUARINI, or any other writer back to THEOCRITUS, than to prove SHAKESPEAR ſuperior to any other dramatic author. Paſtoral poetry has but one character; and, whether we reſort to VIRGIL, to MAMBRUN, his imitator, or onward to any or all of thoſe various penners of ſelf evident truths who have written of hills and dales and fondly fancied themſelves poets, the objects muſt be obvious, ſimple, and natural, and thoſe who have been ſo fortunate, or rather ingenious to blend intereſt, inculcate moral, and afford pleaſure, without inſipidity, dullneſs, or puerility, a charge in which many eminent paſtoral poets are unfortunately involved, are certainly the beſt writers of this deſcription, and, therefore, I ſhall not heſitate to pro-

nounce SPENCER's *Shepherd's Calender*, and SHAKESPEAR's *As You Like It*, the beſt ſpecimens, in their different characters, of this ſpecies of writing *.

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* I know of nothing that has begot more controverſy than this ſubject. A hundred inſtances may be cited, every one as ridiculous as the diſpute between PHILLIPS and POPE, in which the latter gentleman, with his uſual arrogant modeſty, pretends to praiſe his rival that the world may extol him, at the ſame time when GAY's Paſtorals which were better than thoſe of either POPE or PHILLIPS, were little heeded, and all to prove that readers in general are taken in by ſtark nonſenſe and the moſt offenſive puerility, merely becauſe the jingle of the rhime captivates the ear. The famous ballad of SHENSTONE, who, if he had imitated SPENCER as cloſely in every thing elſe as he did in the Schoolmiſtreſs, would have held a higher reputation, has a poorer recommendation to public favour than any thing which ever obtained it, and this is ſaying a great deal, witneſs the following parody "On my banks are all furniſhed with bees," which is juſt as good and not a whit more ridiculous than the original;

My hives are all furniſhed with bees,
Quickſet hedges my fences adorn,
My woods are all crouded with trees,
And my fields yellow over with corn.

I ſeldom have found any tares,
Of ſuch uſe are my harrow and plough,
In my orchard grow apples and pears,
In my dairy there's milk from the cow.

Had the ballad, of which this is part of a parody, never been publiſhed, theſe lines might have ſtood with nine readers out of ten for good paſtoral poetry, for the images are as true, as appropriate, and as intereſting as in the original; but as unfortunately they contain only a repreſentation of well known objects merely noticed and

We have ſeen, under the auſpices of BUCK-

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not wrought upon, nobody cares a halfpenny for the ſhepherd's pictureſque retreat, and the poetry ſinks into quaintneſs and puerility. If he had ſhewn how he trafficked with his honey, and that with the money it produced he brought up a growing family, or ſolaced an aged parent; how his fences ſerved to deſcribe him a worthy member of ſocial life by parting off his poſſeſſions from thoſe of his neighbour, and, therefore, preventing depredations on either ſide, how his trees yielded him firing and timber for uſe and profit, and kindly formed a ſhade when fatigue courted him to repoſe. Had he, in ſhort, ſhewn the comforts derived from his little harveſt, the fruit of his induſtry; the advantage of his harrow and plough, and other agricultural inventions; the cyder, the perry, the butter, the cheeſe, and other bleſſings ſpringing from the produce of his orchard and his dairy. Then would the feigned character of the peaſant have ſpoken the beauty of the poet, and given the ſimpleſt of theſe objects a valuable intereſt. But this is ſeldom the caſe, even with the beſt writers; and, for readers, it is inconceivable how the correcteſt underſtandings are too often deceived into admiration by mere ſound. A gentleman of ſtrong genius, finiſhed education, and true poetic fancy, who has long given up writing for no other reaſon than becauſe after taking unwearied pains, he could not meet with a liberal bookſeller, wrote a burleſque paſtoral which is ſtark nonſenſe from beginning to end, and yet it has been greatly admired as excellent poetry. I have heard ſeveral perſons whoſe underſtandings rank high in the opinion of the world, ſpeak in rapture of the following lines.

> But hark what odours whiſper in the wind!
> Does Sol deſcend, or is my DÆLIA kind?
> Avoid her look, there's magic in her eye;
> Take heed ye mountains, if ye gaze ye die.

Theſe whiſpering odours, falling ſuns, gazing mountains, are a very ſmall ſpecimen of the falſe images this poem contains, and yet there is ſcarcely an imputed beauty in paſtoral poetry, from THEOCRITUS to SHENSTONE, that it does not ſucceſsfully ridicule.

HURST, BERNERS, ſir THOMAS MORE, and others, onward to ſir PHILIP SIDNEY, what ſtrenuous efforts were made to encourage literature in all its branches. Divinity had its advocate in HALES, who was a ſound moraliſt, and a good poet; who was loved and followed in his life time, and whoſe works were publiſhed, after his death, under the title of *Golden Remains of Mr. John Hales.* KING, whoſe pulpit orations were of that ſenſible and convincing kind that graced the doctrine they recommended, was alſo a very populous churchman. King JAMES uſed to call him "the Prince of Preachers," and lord COKE is ſaid to have been ſo charmed with his oratory, that he both declared him the beſt ſpeaker he ever heard, and made his manner the model of his own imitation.

HALL, who was a very accompliſhed poet as well as a learned and ſenſible divine, ſerved not only the cauſe of the church but literature in general; for, while his writings, under the title of *Meditations*, improved the mind, enlarged the underſtanding, inculcated the duties of religion, and deſcribed the beauty of virtue, proving that modeſty, meekneſs, and piety, which he practiſed, his *Satires*, which are full of admirable point, enlivened the imagination, and expoſed the deformity of vice, to the deriſion and contempt in which he himſelf held it.

Overall, who is ſaid to have been the beſt ſcholaſtic divine this country ever produced, was a moſt ſtrenuous and ſucceſsful champion for this great cauſe; and, that he might prove his utility as a citizen as well as a ſcholar, he has earneſtly attempted, in his *Convocation* book, to ſhew that our duty to temporal government ſprings out of our duty to ſpiritual government; a poſition that a divine has ſurely a right to maintain, for an union between ſocial and religious obligation is certainly the moſt laudable thing that can be generally recommended, becauſe, out of the ſpirit of that opinion iſſues the beſt conſequences attendant on ſociety.

Many other learned and elegant writers treated this great theme, at that period, with the becoming dignity and profound knowledge it demanded; and their abilities were properly called into action at this particular moment, when ſo many bigots and caſuiſts joined to decry the Proteſtant religion that had been ſo nobly though ſo recently eſtabliſhed. The diſciples of Bonnor and Mary had yet their advocates, and the embers of thoſe fires, ſo alarming to goodneſs and ſo ſhocking to humanity, that had been kindled in Smithfield, ſeemed now and then to emit a faint warning that without circumſpection the flames might again revive.

As a government eſtabliſhed on the firm baſis of a mild and tolerant religion, ſeemed beſt calculated for a rational and moderate people, which the Engliſh in this reign became, the protection of property of courſe began to be more equitably regulated. Many extraordinary men lent their aſſiſtance to complete a work ſo eſſentially neceſſary to the benefit of ſociety, and many difficulties were got over, and much obſcurity cleared up in the old laws, as well as many admirable amendments introduced in the new.

Cowell, born the ſame year with Shakespear, whoſe ſtudy was not confined to the eccleſiaſtical laws, which branch he particularly profeſſed, very meritoriouſly attempted at a ſimplification of them all; which, when we conſider that the laws are inexplicable at this day, muſt have been a pretty arduous taſk. He wrote a book called *The Interpreter*, wherein he pointed out the ſignification of all law terms that had been uſed or authorized previous to that time; and he wrote a book of *Inſtitutes* in the manner of Justinian, which was conſidered as a work of great merit.

Sir John Davies was another law luminary of conſiderable celebrity, who wrote ſound arguments on juriſprudence, and good poetry; two purſuits that

have ſeldom united in one man. His oratory ſeems to have been of that clear convincing ſort for which lord MANSFIELD was ſo properly admired, and, indeed, the chief juſticeſhip of the King's Bench would have been the appropriate vehicle for the exerciſe of his talents, but unfortunately ſoon after his appointment to that high ſtation he died ſuddenly.

Lord COKE, whoſe great name ſtands ſo high in eſtimation for law learning, enlightened the reign of ELIZABETH. He was ſo indefatigable in the purſuit of his labours, which were eminent and meritorious, it might be ſaid of him as of CÆSAR, that he thought nothing done while there was any thing left to do. "His learned and laborious works on "the laws," ſays a writer, "will be admired by judi-"cious poſterity while Fame has a trumpet or any "breath to blow therein." His labours, however various and extraordinary as they were, in no way fell ſhort of the variety and ſingularity of his fortunes, which were an alternate rotation of power and diſgrace; not ſo much in the reign of ELIZABETH, whom he calls the fountain of juſtice and the life of the law, but afterwards when JAMES came to the throne, who uſed to ſay, ſo well did COKE manage to repair ill fortune, that "he always fell on his "legs like a cat."

Other great men, whoſe eminent abilities added luſtre to the laws of their country, in this reign, might with great propriety be here enumerated. Their merit, indeed, wants no other criterion to prove it than its being able to keep a reſpectable ſtand at the time when BACON dignified human nature.

This wonderful character, whoſe eulogium every body has attempted and nobody has been competent to effect, ſeems to have been born to give a preciſe and accurate diſtinction to the high office of Lord Chancellor. His expanded ideas, his penetrating judgment, and his critical knowledge of cauſes and effects, gave him an innate and fixed comprehenſion of general equity, his competency to diſcern the errors he cancelled or corrected in queſtions of philoſophy, and all thoſe other ſubjects which his great genius ſo univerſally embraced, taught him with the ſame accuracy to determine between deciſion and redreſs; that difficult diſtinction which cannot be made but by a ſound head, and an upright heart.

In my province I can only ſpeak generally of BACON; otherwiſe I ſhould have unfeigned pleaſure in paying my feeble tribute of admiration due

to the talents of ſo exalted a genius. Fortunately the world would anticipate every ſyllable, were it ever ſo true or ever ſo ſtrong, that I could poſſibly write on this great ſubject. His works, that grace the libraries of the learned, will be the beſt teſt of his high reputation which are allowed, by the literati of all EUROPE, to the everlaſting honour of this nation, to have ſtampt him the firſt and moſt extraordinary univerſal genius the world has produced.

Hiſtory, that mirror of the lives and actions of good and bad men, ſet up as the object of imitation or deteſtation of the wiſe and virtuous, was as induſtriouſly and as learnedly treated as divinity, or law, during the reign of ELIZABETH. SPEED, with great judgment and unwearied application, detected the errors of his predeceſſors, and expoſed the futile and fanciful conjectures of GEOFREY, of MONMOUTH, and WILLIAM, of MALMSBURY, in a moſt ſenſible and happy manner. His opinions alſo concerning other hiſtorians are given with no leſs good ſenſe than deference; and, for the materials he was able to collect, and conſidering the uncertainty of events of which at that time nothing but a very imperfect account could be obtained, his *Chronicles of England* contain a fund of infor-

mation, which, from circumſtances, and on compariſon, bear ſtrong reſemblance to authenticity.

Stow has done more than Speed. He took up hiſtory in a very intereſting way; for, beſides his *Chronicles of England*, which traverſe a large field, his *Survey of London* has rendered his hiſtorical intelligence more intereſting by confining the ſubject to its proper ſcene of action. His reſearches into antiquity have turned out very valuable materials for other authors to work upon, and yet thoſe authors have had ſo little candour, or gratitude, that I have ſeen the works of ſome of them who, inſtead of allowing the merit of thoſe they were glad to imitate, have only deplored, that the antiquary Stow, and the hiſtorian Speed, were both taylors.

Daniel, poet laureat to queen Elizabeth, was the firſt who began to give hiſtory a proper poliſh as well as a neceſſary perſpicuity. Daniel had a good deal of the poet in him, and the actions of the great and good are beſt delivered from a poetic mind. His relations of facts are brief and pointed, and his obſervations, both political and moral, inform and entertain.

But theſe, however, as well as others had boaſted

a preceptor in hiſtory of wonderful talents and endowments; a man whoſe clearneſs, force, and natural elegance, had long given luſtre to erudition. This will be acknowledged what I ſay that I mean BUCHANAN, that mixture of SALLUST and LIVY, who united brevity and perſpicuity with grace and politeneſs, and whom DANIEL ſeems to have copied on this account.

BUCHANAN was much honoured in other countries as well as in SCOTLAND, where he was born; and even MELVIL, his cotemporary and rival, who eſpouſed oppoſite opinions, who was the firm and faithful adherent of MARY Queen of Scots, which miſguided woman, had not her weakneſs led her to liſten to the advice of leſs able and leſs honourable counſellors, might have eſcaped all her misfortunes, was not averſe to do every juſtice to the fame and talents of BUCHANAN.

Added to all the other admirable qualities poſſeſſed by BUCHANAN, he was celebrated for the charms of his converſation, in which he ſeems to have emulated the Greeks, for his obſervations were ſhort, nervous, and pointed; full of truth, knowledge, and experience; and might, had they been collected, have made a complete ſtring of apo-

thegms. His ſimplicity, however, and deference led him into an attention to others more artful than himſelf, who impoſed upon his credulity, eſpecially in religious matters.

By this means, though his fidelity remained unſhaken, he relied at laſt in his writings too much on the opinions of others; and, theſe having been advanced too frequently to injure his reputation, he ſubſcribed to the diminution of his own conſequence, little ſuſpecting he was the dupe of an impoſition which he himſelf would have diſdained to practiſe.

This and his popularity, lowered him deſervedly in the judgment of the learned, for he grew careleſs and adopted any vulgar opinion ſo it ſerved to procure him temporary admiration. Shewing that, difficult as it is to attain fame, 'tis much more difficult to preſerve it. The moſt unfriendly, however, of his flatterers, who poiſoned the chalice of praiſe they held up to him for his refreſhment, and the moſt inveterate of his more honeſt, becauſe more open enemies, have never, either by refined inſinuation, or envious aſſertion, been able to withhold from him the impartial award of poſterity which has confirmed him a firm philoſopher, an elegant hiſtorian, a perfect moraliſt, and a good man.

But, if thoſe already mentioned beget our warmeſt praiſe, and demand the admiration of poſterity, what ſhall we ſay when we conſider that this age alſo boaſted the advantage of HOOKER's incomparable merit; that exquiſite improver of the Engliſh language, of whom Pope CLEMENT the eighth ſaid, "this man, indeed, deſerves the praiſe "of an author. His books will get reverence by "age; for there is in them ſuch ſeeds of eternity, "that they will continue till the laſt fire ſhall de-"vour all learning."

Again, commanded by juſtice and truth, we cannot paſs by ſir WALTER RALEIGH; that great man, no leſs extraordinary for his eminent talents, than his unmerited misfortunes; who, in proportion as he enlightened and inſtructed the world experienced its ingratitude. He defeated the Spaniſh Armada, diſcovered a new country, and, as a warrior and a ſtateſman, did his nation the moſt ſingular and important ſervices, and in return was ſtript of his preferment, loaded with ignominy, and condemned to die as a traitor.

The delight of his life being the good of his fellow creatures, he employed his time in the Tower, where, after being reprieved, which was a ſufficient

indication of his innocence, he was many years confined, in exploring the deepeſt receſſes of literature. All ſubjects were alike to him, epiſtles, poetry, war, navigation, geography, politics, philoſophy, and hiſtory, came with new luſtre from his deſcriptive pen.

At length, his philanthrophic and meritorious ſervices having been felt and acknowledged, and the times demanding a more active exerciſe of ſuch brilliant talents, he was called again into action; when, with the benignity and forgetfulneſs of injury only native in a great mind, he loſt his anger in his patriotiſm, and ruſhed to ſoccour his country. He atchieved wonders, aſſiſted by his ſon, who had the melancholy glory of loſing his life like another MARCUS, fighting gallantly by the ſide of his father.

But the more brilliant his career, the more the ſun of his glory engendered the venom of malignity. Were the circumſtance not upon record it would not be believed; that a nation ſo full of ſplendid reputation, ſo celebrated for impartial juſtice, ſhould ſo deface the monuments of its fame as to ſacrifice the hero who reared them. Sir WALTER RALEIGH, being complained of to a weak king by an inſidious foe, was given up to juſtice for having

ſerved his country; and, when nothing could touch his life upon this unworthy accuſation, that the meaſure of his injuries might be full, and the ſlanderous and envious might be glutted and gratified, he was beheaded for the former ſuppoſed crime, of which his innocence had been honourably manifeſted by a full pardon, and which pardon had been confirmed and ratified by an important and dignified command in the ſervice of his country*.

I cannot wind up my account of hiſtorians at this period without mentioning the celebrated CAMDEN, who we may remember was preceptor to JONSON, and who ſeems to have flogged into him all that learning and ill nature for which he was ſo remarkable. *Britannia* is deſervedly a work of great reputation. The origin, manners, and laws of the ancient Britons are there well deſcribed and ſenſibly commented on.

This Engliſh Pauſanius, as he has been called,

* It is very material to the reputation of ELIZABETH, to notice that this ignominous and diſgraceful ſtain to regal dignity did not happen in her reign. RALEIGH was not the only great character whoſe reputation, that had been foſtered under her genial influence, chilled into night and winter when the ſun of her patronage went down, and the indelible diſgrace of putting this extraordinary man undeſervedly to death is only one reproachful ſtigma among many, that attached to JAMES, and that ſunk the arts into gradual inaction.

took unwearied pains to celebrate all that was worthy, valiant, and great in the annals of his country; and, at the ſame time that he excitee emulation in young minds, he formed them for great undertakings; for he was maſter of Weſtminſter ſchool, whence have iſſued ſo many divines, lawyers, warriors, and ſtateſmen. His opinions were proudly looked up to, and his learning, his judgment, his univerſal knowledge, and the diſcharge of his profeſſional duties, procured him the protection of his ſovereign, the aſſociation of that great, and the admiration of the literati, who dignified him by the appellation of the great CAMDEN.

Going on I might inſtance GEORGE CAREW, earl of TOTNESS, who wrote the *Hiſtory of the Wars in Ireland*, beſides collecting ſeveral Chronologies, Letters, Charters, and Monuments, in four large manuſcript volumes, which are ſtill in the Bodelian Library at OXFORD, and ſir GEORGE CAREW, brother to lord TOTNESS, who was employed on embaſſies from ENGLAND to the courts of POLAND and FRANCE, whence he collected many hiſtorical particulars which he introduced into a work addreſſed to JAMES the firſt, though written and publiſhed originally in the reign of ELIZABETH, called *A Relation of the State of France, with the Characters*

of Henry the Fourth, and the principal Perſons of that Court.

But, to wave all thoſe branches of literature, for inſtance philoſophy, in which, beſide thoſe mentioned in many others. ADAMSON conſpicuouſly ſhone; who was to the philoſophers of FRANCE what NEWTON was afterwards to DESCARTES. He eſcaped the maſſacre of PARIS, on the Feaſt of St. BARTHOLOMEW, by miracle, having been concealed in a houſe, the maſter of which was thrown into the ſtreet and daſhed to pieces for having ſheltered the Proteſtants. ADAMSON was archbiſhop of St. ANDREW, and a great promoter of the works of LINDSAY, with whom he was joined in an important commiſſion, ſo that the enmity among the churchmen, that LINDSAY drew down on him by his ſatirical writings, was in no reſpect imputable to or connived at by ADAMSON.

Putting by phyſic, rhetoric, the mathematics, and all the relative literary ſtudies, I ſhall finiſh this ſubject by briefly touching on poetry, of which, ſpeaking generally of the ſubject, I know not if SPENCER was not king. At at any rate he felt himſelf a monarch; but being no more than poetically ſo, and, therefore, not able literally to command any ſubjects, he was determined figuratively to reign over more than all the monarchs of the earth. Thus

whole legions of fairies, goblins, and monſters appeared and diſappeared at a ſtroke of that poetic ſceptre his pen. Palaces, temples, and enchanted caſtles were built in the compaſs of a diſtich; and to make the empire large enough, for its inhabitants, the whole regions of fancy were choſen for his ſcenes of action. Theſe with great felicity, he wrought to the wiſeſt and beſt of purpoſes; and in the rewards and puniſhments of his different ſubjects, according to their virtues and vices, he has given a ſyſtem of morality that will ever be an ornament to poſterity. This, morality is particularly advantageous by being conveyed in a ſtile of the moſt brilliant fancy and moſt perfect truth.

His genius has been the admiration of all thoſe who can feel and diſcriminate; and what defects may be found in him were attributable only to the early times he wrote in; all that barbariſm having not yet been cleared away in which they were found by his predeceſſor CHAUCER, in whoſe ſteps he trod; but being poſſeſſed of more exalted abilities, he ſhewed the great diſtinction of genius by improving upon mind, rather than manner; for SPENCER manifeſted all the great ſoul of CHAUCER, without deigning ſervilely to confine himſelf to the contracted and narrow limits to which that great man had ſubmitted: though, perhaps, more from neceſſity than inclination.

The fortunes of SPENCER were truly poetical; they reſembled an April day, and were alternately chequered by clouds and ſunſhine. It is true he wore a laurel crown, but it was ſo barren, that it did not bear, for a conſiderable time a ſingle leaf; and when his affairs mended, it was more owing to the ſolicitations of thoſe individuals to whom he was deſervedly dear, than to his own perſonal merit.

Queen ELIZABETH, who accorded him his withering laurel, at length, by many ſolicitations, accorded him alſo what enabled him for a time to live comfortably. Of this, however, this king was diſpoſſeſſed, and died in all the grief of low fortune and diſappointment. He has left, however, a queen who ſweetly ſings his departed merits, that the miſts of prejudice being now removed, his fame will live when thoſe who have ſince attempted to endanger it, by vexatious cavilling, are forgotten.

SHAKESHEAR's talents having been almoſt wholly confined to dramatic poetry, it will be unneceſſary to inſiſt on them in this digreſſive part of the work, their influence claiming full notice in its body, of which they compoſe the vitals. JONSON alſo and the reſt of the dramatic writers, for reaſons ſome-

thin a ſkin to theſe, need not to be mentioned; and it would be repetition to ſpeak of DANIEL, RALEIGH, SIDNEY, or FAIRFAX. I ſhall, therefore, content myſelf with winding up the ſubject of literature in general by remarking, that, taking it in all points of view, I do not ſay the annals of the world cannot produce an era in which exiſted ſo much collective merit, but I think it out of doubt that no other age can boaſt three ſuch men as BACON, SHAKESPEAR, and SPENCER.

CHAP. IX.

PAINTING.

THIS art which is ſaid to have ariſen among the Egyptians, and which, as in almoſt every other inſtance, the Greeks carried to perfection, was known later in ENGLAND to any extent or degree of excellence than in any other civilized country.

It is doubtful whether we can with any propriety pin our faith on the accounts of the very ancient painters. If we were to take implicitly what we are told to believe, we ſhould place APELLES, and XEUXES, by the ſide of CORREGIO, RAPHAEL, and REYNOLDS *, but this is impoſſible. The very

* It is ridiculous to think of what has been ſaid of the ancient painters, POUSSIN uſed to ſay that RAPHAEL was an angel compared to the modern painters, but an aſs compared to the ancients. In the firſt place the aſſertion muſt be falſe and contemptible; but, were it true, neither POUSSIN nor any other could poſſibly produce

colours could have flatly contradicted so absurd a belief; besides, as painting is the very art which can never attain complete perfection, nature being inimitable it cannot possibly be, that in the barbarous age in which ALEXANDER massacred so many peaceable strangers, whose territories he laid in ruins, and whose comfort he destroyed, to gratify a frantic and useless ambition, that painting, which is a sober, studious art, and which can only thrive in civilized soil, could have attained any perfection, in spight of the story of the birds and the curtain, or the famous saying that there were two ALEXANDERS, one invincible sprung from the loins of PHILIP, and the other inimitable produced from the pencil of APELLES.

This cannot be better confirmed than by what actually happened in ITALY; where, previous to the incursions of the barbarians, painting flourished to, perhaps, a higher degree of reputation than

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any proof of it, for what did they or do we know of the ancients by whom they mean APELLES, ZEUXIS, and the rest but by hearsay. Sculpture, reaching further into posterity, may be known. PHIDIAS and PRAXITELES we, perhaps, have some vestages of. Stone and marble do not change colour, and they grow perfect among children of GUSTO by being mutilated; but what amateur, however invulnerable to imposition, can shew us a painting in high preservation, for that is the cant, of the same early date.

poetry. In the latter times of the republic, and under the firſt emperors, ROME had conſiderable maſters; but, when the barbarians, with almoſt as much ferocity as ALEXANDER and his army, inundated ITALY, painting, ſo far from boaſting a ſingle APELLES, ſhrunk into nothing and was reduced to its primitive elements.

In the age of JULIUS the ſecond, and LEO the tenth, it began again to revive, and this revolution has given riſe to the diſtinction of ancient and modern painting; the firſt comprehending the Greek and Roman painters, and the other that ſet who formed themſelves into ſchools, and from whom alone, to ſay the truth, we have a right to date the perfection of this art. So that the uſual mode of expreſſing ourſelves according to this, is a perverſion of the original meaning; for we conſider the painters who began to flouriſh under LEO the tenth as the ancients, which is in point of fact perfectly right; for, however, the art might before have been exerciſed to the admiration of thoſe who were not civilized enough to judge of ſo elegant a ſtudy, and, however, it might have branched into partial ſtreams in GREECE and ROME, there was no ſource, no fountain-head till it collected itſelf in ITALY.

CIMABUE in the thirteenth century with infinite

diligence collected the materials of painting, the very idea of which had then ſhrunk into obſcurity; and the difficulty with which he obtained a very ſlight knowledge of what the art had been in GREECE is quite enough to ſhew, that what we pretend to know of it at preſent is built upon a ſhallow foundation indeed.

Some Florentines ſeconded the labours of CIMABUE, and to ſo good a purpoſe, that though rude in the profeſſion themſelves, they knew ſo well the elements of it that their ſcholars ſoom became celebrated; the perfection of painting, therefore, may be dated from the latter part of the fifteenth century, at which time ANDREA PEROCCHIO was the maſter of LEONARDA de VINCI, PIETRO PERUGINO of RAPHAEL URBIN, and GHIRLANDAIO of MICHAEL ANGELO.

Soon after this, as all the world knows, painting took ſuch ſtrides towards perfection; that, owing to the ſchools theſe great men eſtabliſhed, ANGELO having ſet up his at FLORENCE, RAPHAEL at ROME, and VINCI at MILAN, it was carried to a pitch of excellence from which connoiſures inſiſt it has ever ſince been on the decline.

Certainly the talents of LEONARDA de VINCI,

whoſe ſtudy was to diffuſe that merit he ſo eminently poſſeſſed, who was the painter's preceptor, and the favourite of kings, by this time had made their rightful impreſſion. MICHAEL ANGELO, who was conſidered as the greateſt deſigner that ever exiſted, and acknowledged to know anatomy more perfectly than any man in the world, who ſought perfection in ſolitude, and of whom it was ſaid that painting was jealous and required the whole man to herſelf, by this time had added wonder to curioſity.

It is extraordinary that this great man was equally remarkable in painting, ſculpture, and architecture, and beſides was a good poet. His ſtatues, though few, were, however admirable. His paintings were numerous, and are ſo well known that it would be an inſult to his memory, and the taſte of the conoſcenti, to deſcribe their beauties, and his fame as an architect will remain while their is any veſtage of St. PETER's at ROME*, St. JOHN's at FLORENCE, the Capitol, the Farneſe Palace, or his own houſe.

* I muſt here give another proof how very indefinite all aſſertions are as to hiſtorical facts. Able authors inſiſt that MICAAEL ANGELO built St. PETER's at ROME, at the ſame time that they as poſitively inſiſt it was built by RAPHAEL, at the expreſs command of LEO the tenth. Perhaps my wiſeſt way would have been to have ſunk both aſſertions, but I thought it the faireſt conduct to let them go as they are that my readers may judge for themſelves.

RAPHAEL who deſerves, perhaps, even ſtronger praiſe than his great cotemporaries had alſo to the other various perfections of painting added the Graces. He has been ſtyled the Prince of Painters and the divine RAPHAEL.

Du FRESNOY ſays, ſpeaking of this wonderful man, that "he ſurpaſſed all modern painters," ſtill adhering to the old diſtinction of making the Greeks the ancients, "becauſe he poſſeſſed more of the "excellent parts of painting than any other; and "it is believed that he equalled the ancients, ex-"cepting that he deſigned not naked bodies with "ſo much learning as MICHAEL ANGELO; but "his guſto of deſign is purer, and much better. "He painted with not ſo good, ſo full, and ſo "graceful a manner, as CORREGIO; nor has he "any thing of the contraſt of the lights and ſhadows, "or ſo ſtrong and free a colouring, as TITIAN; "but he had without compariſon a better diſpoſition "in his pieces, than either TITIAN, CORREGIO, "MICHAEL ANGELO, or all the reſt of the ſuc-"ceeding painters to our days. His choice of atti-"tudes, of heads, of ornaments, the ſuitableneſs of his "drapery, his manner of deſigning, his varieties, his "contraſts, his expreſſions, were beautiful in per-"fection; but above all, he poſſeſſed the graces in "ſo advantageous a manner, that he has never ſince "been equalled by any other."

The ſchool of theſe three great maſters confirmed the reign of painting ſo completely, that it could not but be diffuſed for ever through the world; for excluſive of the great number of pupils they turned out, thoſe ſchools at length grew into a ſyſtematic eſtabliſhment under the CARACCI; who, added to their own reſpective merits, have rendered their names illuſtrious by complimenting the world with ſuch painters as GUIDO, DOMENECHINO, and LANFRANCO; thus continuing the ſtudy of painting in its moſt finiſhed and perfect ſtyle almoſt up to the preſent time.

The influence of this art by this time was felt in remoter countries. ALBERT DURER, began to aſtoniſh GERMANY, HOLBEN, or HOLBEIN, SWITZERLAND, and LUCAS, HOLLAND. FRANCE, and FLANDERS had their painters, and ENGLAND felt a reflected glow from this warmth that diffuſed itſelf through the Continent which kindled ſoon into a fire under the influence of ſir THOMAS MORE, who introduced HOLBEIN to HENRY the eighth *.

* This introduction was very ſtriking, and exhibits a certain proof that before that time painting had arrived to no perfection in ENGLAND. Sir THOMAS MORE invited the king to an entertainment; and, in the great hall of his houſe hung up all the favourite pictures of HOLBEIN, diſpoſed in the moſt advantageous ſituations

After the arrival of HOLBEIN, painting began to be better known in ENGLAND; and during the reign of ELIZABETH the names and productions of HEMSKIRK, who ſtudied at ROME, and modelled himſelf upon the Italian ſchool, and who, though not very deſervedly, was called the RAPHAEL of HOLLAND and BREUGEL, whoſe drawings are ſaid to be ſo correct that they cannot be copied, began to be known.

ELSHEIMER whoſe pictures are generally ſmall landſcapes, hiſtories, or candlelight pieces with figures, and which are ſo remarkable for the prodigious labour and pains he beſtowed upon them that they are ſo highly eſteemed as only to be found in the cabinets of princes, was alſo a name that found its way into the court of ELIZABETH.

But OTHO VENIUS, the maſter of RUBENS, brought the taſte of the Engliſh for painting much forwarder than it has been before. He ſtudied at

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they could be placed. The king was ſo delighted with the pictures that he requeſted to know if the artiſt was alive, and if any money would tempt him to reſide in his court. This was the effect ſir THOMAS wiſhed the pictures to produce. HOLBEIN was introduced to the king, who took him into his ſervice, and recommended him to the nobility, and thus it is that we have ſo many original paintings of HOLBEIN in this country.

ROME particularly under ZUCHERO, and afterwards returned to ANTWERP, where he ornamented the principal churches with his paintings. He had many tempting offers both from FRANCE and ENGLAND to leave his native country, but could never be prevailed upon; they were, therefore, obliged to be content with his pictures, which it may be eaſily conceived, as they formed RUBENS, were admirable objects of imitation for the painters of a country, in which the art was yet in its infancy as to its native artiſts.

That it was known, however, and that very univerſally, cannot be doubted; for we are generally given to underſtand that no leſs than fifteen thouſand Flemiſh artiſts of different deſcriptions were ſettled in LONDON at the death of HENRY the eighth; and as at the head of the painters we have ſeen HOLBEIN the principal ſupport at that time of the Flemiſh ſchool, it is impoſſible but the art of painting muſt have been greatly admired, and of courſe imitated.

This importation of Flemiſh artiſts continued throughout the whole reign of ELIZABETH; and by this means, at ſecond hand, the Engliſh had the ſatisfaction of becoming acquainted with the works

of GUIDO, TITIAN, JULIO ROMANO, and CORREGIO; and, as many noblemen and ambaſſadors had alſo imported pictures from ITALY, neither RAPHAEL nor his cotemporaries were altogether unknown in ENGLAND.

CHAP X.

MUSIC.

HAVING already taking up the ſubject of GUIDO ARETINE, with a view to ſhew that his diſcoveries were the improvement, not the invention of muſic, I ſhall now ſpeak of that theme, on which I always dwell with ſo much pleaſure, by watching its progreſs onward from that period to the death of of ELIZABETH *.

* There are four great men of the name of ARETINE. The firſt GUIDO, is this inventor of muſic as he has been called. The ſecond, LEONARD, was celebrated for eloquence, and had theſe words for an epitaph. "Since the death of LEONARD hiſtory is in mourning, "eloquence is become mute. The Greek and Latin Muſes cannot "forbear ſhedding tears." The third, FRANCIS, was a great teacher, and ſuch an expounder of law that he was called the Prince of Subtilties. He had ſuch a vivacity of genius that his wit became a proverb. The fourth, PETER, was famous for his ſatirical writings. He was ſo bold as to venture invectives againſt kings; and, it was on this account that he got the title of the Scourge of Princes. He picqued himſelf on his lampoons, and ſaid that they did more good to the world than ſermons, and this judgment as his ſatire kept morality in view, obtained; but it at laſt led him into li-

I have ſhewn already that muſic is very ancient in this country; but, that there may be no conteſt as to what it was any where before ARETINE, or in what manner its influence was conveyed to the heart, I ſhall now only take it up from his time, and keep to this ſpot, except any alluſions ſhould be neceſſary to throw a light on the ſubject.

Chriſtianity introduced muſic into ENGLAND. "In tracing the progreſs of choral muſic in this "country," ſays BEDE, "it is worthy of remark "that as it was firſt eſtabliſhed in the cathedral of "CANTERBURY, when the firſt of the Roman "ſingers ſettled on the converſion of the Engliſh to "chriſtianity, ſo that choir for a ſeries of years pro-"duced a ſucceſſion of men diſtinguiſhed for their "excellence in it. Among theſe, THEODORE the "archbiſhop, and ADRIAN the abott, his friend and "coadjutor, are particularly noted."

Thus muſic gained onward to WILLIAM the Conqueror, for this original eſtabliſhment of muſic at CANTERBURY was in the eighth century. In the

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centiouſneſs which proved fatal to him; and thus his enemies gained a complete triumph over him; for, being delighted with ſome obſcene and immoral converſation, he was ſeized with ſuch a violent fit of laughter, that, overturning the chair, on which he ſat, he fell upon his head and received ſuch a blow that he died upon the ſpot.

reign of that monarch lived a man named OSBERN, though BALE places him a century backwarder, to whom is attributed as much as to ARETINE, nay, this author says that ARETINE was only his follower. This man was much favoured by LANFRANC bishop of CANTERBURY, and is spoken of as one profoundly skilled in the science of music. He left behind him a treatise which has thrown many new lights on harmony; but it is so crude, indigested, and abstruse, that, like many other things on that subject, it were better that it had never been written.

There can be no doubt, however, that, except the native and wild melodies which were the characteric of the national music here as they were every where else, that what was called music scientifically was little more than the gregorian chant, so often mentioned, and which certainly made up the essence of the recitative of LULLY.

St. BERNARD, who lived in the twelfth century, has endeavoured to simplify this species of music, and, as he calls it, "correct the folly of "those who depart from the rules of melody." He complains, as any man of taste would do who lives at this day, of the foppery and irregularity of teachers, who promulgate absurdity and consecrate error.

"But," says he, "they say it is done by a kind of "musical licence. What sort of licence is this, "which, walking in the region of dissimilitude, in- "troduces confusion and uncertainty, the mother "of presumption and the refuge of error? I say "what is this liberty which joins opposites and goes "beyond natural land-marks; and which, as it im- "poses an inelegance on the composition, offers an "insult to nature."

This man who knew and felt that nothing seconds devotion like music, did not wish that the priests should introduce schisms for the ears any more than for mind. Indeed his labours were indefatigable to root out imposition in both; neither, however, succeeded to his wish, though in both he wrought some reform, but imposition is the essence of professors of sciences as well as of religion; and while by deception money may be got little conscience will be made of passing off fallacy for truth, and art for nature.

Music was in the thirteenth century so favourite a topic that it employed the pens of many eminent authors. Walter Monk, of Evesham, a man as well of lively wit as of sincere devotion, for these qualities are certainly not incompatible, wrote a sensible work which he called *Of the Speculation of*

Muſic. The celebrated ROGER BACON, who was complimented on account of his extraordinary talents with the title of Magician, under a general belief that his tranſcendant abilities muſt have been ſupernatural, and whoſe brazen head has ſo often infuſed terror into the minds of the ignorant, that he might leave no ſcience untreated, wrote a work which he called *De Valore Muſices.*

SIMON TAILLER, a dominican, and a Scotchman, JOHANNES PEDIASIMUS, and ſeveral others, were alſo at this period muſical writers; but it would be trivial to notice more than that it was a part of the clerical duty to know the principles of harmony, and this clearly proves in what manner the Clerks who exhibited at Clerkenwell came to be qualified to repreſent the Myſteries, which conſiſted of ſinging as well as dialogue.

But this is not all. Muſic was not only known to the laity, but taught them by the churchmen, who very ſenſibly and properly ſoftened the more rigorous duties of religious worſhip by permitting innocent relaxations of this kind, eſpecially among the youthful part of both ſexes, who very naturally and laudably indulged in that vivacity which ſoftened their labour and taught them to know content.

Thus ſuch ſongs and ballads as ſuited their ſituations and talents, in ENGLAND as in every other country, became the delight and the ſolace of the wretched, the luxury of the indolent, and the relaxation of the thrifty; all which, were proof neceſſary, might be traced back to very remote times but we have no time nor occaſion for the ſearch.

To ſhew, however, that nothing could be more common and familiar than muſic, it made up the delight of the people in the fourteenth century. The carpenter's wife in CHAUCER's *Miller's Tale* is courted to the muſic of the ſautrie, by her lover NICHOLAS the ſcholar of OXFORD. Her other lover, ABSOLON the pariſh clerk, ſings to his geterne, and his ribible. All this has been remarked by an ingenious author who ſays "if ſo many arts were neceſſary to win the heart of a carpenter's wife, what "muſical accompliſhments muſt be requiſite to gain "the affections of females in higher life."

CAMDEN ſpeaks of the muſic of theſe times, and notices that the poetry, which was evidently comic, and which he calls "bobbing rhimes," though they were levelled at the vices of the clergy, were written by clergymen. He tells us of WALTER de MASSES, and ſays that, though in the reign

of HENRY the ſecond, he filled all ENGLAND with his meriments, he was archdeacon of OXFORD; ſo that poets of all deſcriptions very ſenſibly contributed to the public amuſement by courting the beſt poſſible aſſiſtance their writings could profit by.

In the fifteenth century theſe ditties were multiplied into a prodigious number; CHAUCER's ballads, of which he compoſed many, were in great vogue, as were alſo thoſe of LYDGATE, and other writers. JOHN SHIRLEY, in the year 1440, made a large collection of theſe which were publiſhed under the title of "A Boke cleped the abſtracte "brevyaire, compyled of diverſe ballades, roundels, "virilays, tragedyes, envoys, complaints, moralityes, "ſtoryes practyſed, and eke devyſed and ymagined, "as it ſheweth here following, collected by JOHN "SHIRLEY."

It is imagined that the tunes of theſe ſongs are all loſt, but I cannot be induced to believe it, and I ſhould not wonder on the contrary, if many of them were familiar to us at this moment. Who knows the origin *Derry Down*, *Oh Ponder Well*, and many others, which will never be forgot. We know that in ſome of the madrigals, which were compoſed in this and the following century, the

Italian ſchool, in its higheſt proſperity, never produced any thing, either for melody or harmony, more beautiful.

The earlieſt authority it is acknowledged that we have of a poſitive tune, and the name of its compoſer, is to a ſong of CHAUCER beginning, "I "have a lady." It was compoſed by CORNYSH in the reign of HENRY the eighth, but this weighs nothing with me. When I conſider that one of the ſweeteſt combinations of melody and harmony that ever adorned the ſweeteſt of all ſtudies was compoſed as nearly as poſſible to that very time, I cannot be awake and believe that muſic, even in that reign, was not in the higheſt perfection, or at leaſt that there were not compoſers that unconſciouſly excelled the productions of ITALY; for it is impoſſible to deny that it is a higher compliment to the reputation of a compoſer to be known by "How merrily we "live," the glee that I allude to, than by the moſt abſtruſe church compoſition that ever was compoſed.

It is not, therefore, certain, becauſe we know of no tunes written down and handed forward that we are not in poſſeſſion of them. There cannot be a doubt but nurſes and other common people have learned them of one another from time immemorial;

and, by the ſame token, when the beautiful melodies which are now our favourites, ſhall be ſung familiarily and with pleaſure two hundred years hence by all thoſe who have hearts and ears, it will be little conjectured that they owe the delight they receive to PURCELL, ARNE, and BOYCE.

According to this, I don't care for what is treaſured up, I care for what is univerſally known; and my reaſon particularly is, that what is treaſured up is ſcientific, and what is univerſally known is natural, one is ingenuity, and the other genius, one art, and the other nature; and thus, upon the ſame principle that oral tradition has done much more for hiſtory than record, ſo memory muſt infallibly have done more for muſic than notation, and if I am aſked, having no chronicled proof of this aſſertion, how I can maintain it, I ſhall anſwer that the fact is as unerring as any other fixed criterion in nature; and that, though I did not ſee the ſun ſhine two hundred years ago, I can with ſafety inſiſt that his beams were as radiant, and his career as glorious as at this moment.

At the ſame time I do not blame the diligence of thoſe who have taken pains to aſcertain what veſtiges there are of ancient muſic in this country, and one of my reaſons is, that in ſo doing, they may

fall in the way of materials that might ſhame the muſic of any other country, I have given one ſtrong inſtance of this, and ſhall by and by produce other inſtances. In the mean time, that I may not get too forward, I ſhall make ſome remarks on muſic in the fourteenth century.

It has been well noticed, by an ingenious and elegant writer, that nothing has given ſo complete an inſight into the character of muſic, at this remote period, as the writings of BOCCACE and CHAUCER. *The Ten Tales* of BOCCACE contained in his *Decameron*, are not only entirely dramatic, but of that particular ſpecies that might be immediately formed into operas; ſo are the *Canterbury Tales* of CHAUCER. The materials are perfectly adapted for muſic; and, to ſhew how nearly poetry and muſic are allied, and in their nature bear the ſame locality, the ſubjects BOCCACE has choſen are elegant and refined, ſuch would beſt ſuit Italian muſic, at that time regular and ſcientific, and thoſe of CHAUCER common and natural, ſuch as ſuited the plain ſimplicity of Engliſh muſic, in which laſt character, by the bye, is ſometimes contained a ſublimity beyond ſcience.

After a plague at FLORENCE, BOCCACE makes ſeven ladies, of noble birth and honourable principles, propoſe to retire to a diſtance for fear of in-

fection, and to deplore the misfortunes of the times; but, leſt they ſhould too rigidly indulge their melancholy they determine to invite three gentlemen, alſo of birth and honour, to accompany them. The ſcheme is put into execution; their little retreat becomes a perfect paradiſe; and, among other things, to beguile the time, they each relate a ſtory.

But this is not all, we are told that this company ſung, danced, and played upon various inſtruments; and we are given to underſtand that they introduced the ſtory of *Palamon and Arcite*, which we may remember ſo delighted queen ELIZABETH, and other novels, and that they even called in their ſervants to perſonate the clowns and under parts, who accompanied themſelves with the bagpipe, while others played the lute and the viol; hence we have clearly the origin of the Italian opera.

CHAUCER, who went for ſimplicity as BOCCACE did for elegance, choſe a more common and more homely vehicle. He ſuppoſes twenty-nine perſons of both ſexes, of as different employments and characters as the moſt fertile imagination could ſuggeſt, together with himſelf, making in all thirty, who ſet out from the Tabarde Inn in the Borough *, on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. THOMAS

* This inn was formerly the lodging of the abbot of HYDE near

a BECKET, at CANTERBURY. Among theſe are a ſquire, his ſon, and his ſervant; a prioreſs, a nun, a monk, a merchant, a clerk of OXFORD, a ſerjeant at law, a haberdaſher, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, a cook, a ploughman, a miller, and other characters equally well contraſted.

Each of theſe characters is to tell two tales in the way to CANTERBURY, and two on their return. They caſt lots who ſhall begin and the firſt lot falls on the knight, who tells the ſtory of *Palamon and Arcite*, from which EDWARDS took his play which has been already noticed *.

WINCHESTER, the ſign was a Tarbarde, a word ſignifying a ſhort jacket, or ſleeveleſs coat, whole before, open on both ſides, with a ſquare collar and hanging ſleeves. STOW tells us that from the wearing of this garment ſome of thoſe on the foundation at Queen's College are called Taberdarii. The ſervants of their reſpective maſters walked in coats of this form in proceſſion from the Middle Temple to Weſtminſter Hall, at the general call of ſerjeants in 1736. The hoſt of this inn at the time of CHAUCER was named BAILLIE. His character is admirably drawn, and the humour of it greatly heightened by his having a termagant for his wife. DRYDEN delights in this idea, and ſays that from the truth and variety thrown into the different deſcriptions of CHAUCER's characters, "he was "enabled to form an idea of the humours, the features, nay the "very dreſs of the pilgrims as diſtinctly as if he had ſupped with "them at the Tabarde at Southwark."

* Having mentioned DRYDEN's own opinion of CHAUCER. It may not be amiſs to relate what he ſays of COWLEY, who never could bear the idea of that great poet. With as much wonder as

In thoſe tales, not only the muſic of thoſe times is particularly deſcribed, but the names of the inſtruments are enumerated on which the performers were accuſtomed to play. The lute, the rote, the fiddle, the ſautrie, the bagpipe, the getron, the ribible, the citole, and the flute, were inſtruments in common uſe*, and from many lines inthe prologues

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pity, DRYDEN ſays, "I have often heard the late earl of LEICESTER "ſay that Mr. COWLEY was of opinion that CHAUCER was a dry "old faſhioned wit not worth receiving; and that, having read him "over at my lord's requeſt, he declared he had no taſte of him." Perhaps COWLEY would have liked him if he had introduced a few more expletives. The author, whoſe work has put me in mind of this remark of DRYDEN, ſpeaks of another circumſtance equally as extraordinary, which is, that HANDEL make no ſcruple of declaring himſelf inſenſible as to the muſic of PURCELL. That PURCELL very often ſoard above HANDEL is a truth; but that HANDEL did not taſte what he loved and ſtudied cannot be truth. Perhaps envy repreſented CHAUCER to COWLEY, through the veil of affectation and quaintneſs, and PURCELL to HANDEL, through the fog of fugue and counterpoint.

* SPEGHT ſuppoſes the rote to ſignify an inſtrument uſed in WALES, but it has been contended that SPEGHT has miſtaken the word for crota, or crowd. Dr. JOHNSON, however, with the aſſiſtance of SPENCER, has ſet the matter right by ſhewing that it means a harp. SPENCER's words are,

> Worthy of great PHEBUS' rote,
> The triumphs of PHLEGREAN JOVE he wrote,
> That all th. gods admired his lofty note.

The ſautrie is evidently a corruption from pſaltery, and getron is the cittern, and the citole is unqueſtionably the dulcimer.

to the different ſtories we learn by what ſort of perſons theſe inſtruments were played upon. The prologue to the ſquire's tale ſays,

> He coude ſonges make and wel endite
> Juſte *, and eke daunce, protray and wel write.

So that we find the ſon of a knight educated in a manner ſuitable to his birth, was able to write, dance, portray, and make verſes, nay, and to add muſic to his verſes, if the term to make ſongs may be ſo underſtood and ſo of the reſt †. But many other inſtruments were uſed at that time as may be ſeen by the following liſt of performers who attended EDWARD the third, five trompettes, one cyteler, five pipers, one tabrete, one mabre, two clarions, one fedeller, three waightes.

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* Juſts were tilts and tournaments.

† It may not be unentertaining to notices that the manner of the time in which CHAUCER lived are well delineated in theſe Tales. We learn from them that a haberdaſher, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, and a maker of tapeſtry, were in the rank of ſuch citizens as had expectation of becoming Lord Mayor of LONDON; and that their wives in conſequence were called Madams. That cooks were great cheats, and would dreſs the ſame meat more than once. That the maſters of ſhips were pirates, and made it no caſe of conſcience to ſteal the wine out of the veſſels of their chapmen while they lay aſleep, that phyſicians, to appear more wiſe and more incomprehenſible, made aſtrology a part of their ſtudy, that weaving of cloth was a very profitable trade, and that there was a manufactory of that kind near Bath, and that bigotry was ſo prevalent that even the wife of a weaver would not ſcruple to make a pilgrimage to ROME, or JERUSALEM.

This will be ſufficient to ſhew that muſic, in its native ſimplicity, and therefore in its trueſt beauty, was known and admired in the fourteenth century, and that in proportion as poetry became familiar it of courſe called for the aſſiſtance of this its auxiliary; thus there can be no doubt but we ſhould at this moment be able to aſcertain the very airs ſung in common from EDWARD the third to HENRY the eighth, many of which I have no doubt we know, but are unconſcious of their dates, were it not that notation was rendered obſolete by the reformation; which, as it deſtroyed every veſtige of the manuſcriptural church muſic at the diſſolution of the monaſtaries, ſo of courſe it had no more mercy upon the laical.

Indeed many other reaſons concurred to render ancient notation uſeleſs. Printing, though it had gone a very extenſive length towards embelliſhing literature, had not yet extended to muſic. Every character uſed for the purpoſe of rendering ſound upon paper had been borrowed from the Roman ritual, and circulated in manuſcript. Types now ſet the matter to rights; and, as every inventor is fond of illuſtrating his diſcoveries as amply and variouſly as poſſible, what wonder of notation ſhould

be conveyed with encreasing elegance, till, at last, it arrived to the form in which we now see it.

On this account those compositions, for which English composers have been so celebrated, and particularly their madrigals, were not made known till early in the sixteenth century; that is to say, in such a form as to be transmitted on to us, for that they were common and in high estimation is indubitable, but being written in odd parts, without bars, and with ligatures, it is impossible for us to fix on them so precise a character as to form any judgment of the melodies or the relation the parts have to each other.

In this case, though we must implicitly give credit to that genius and that knowledge which were as completely known in that early period in England as every where else, yet no certainty as to their particular operation can attach to our assertions till Henry the eighth; who, by destroying the convents and with them the books and manuscripts found there, obliged music to shift for itself; which, being a child of nature, acquired strength and beauty from that emancipation.

We shall be led, however, by this means to some

certainty as to compoſers in the fifteenth century; for not only the madrigals that were invented after the new notation were at that time printed, but many of the old ones were made to aſſume this more perfect form, and, therefore, are preſerved even to this day. "*Sumer is Icumen*, a celebrated madrigal for ſix voices, the manuſcript of which is now in the Britiſh Muſeum, was compoſed about 1460. SKELTON, in the reign of HENRY the ſeventh, wrote ſongs, which were compoſed in parts by CORNISH, and many others might be mentioned.

FRANCHINUS, who wrote a work which was printed at MILAN, gives ſome of the firſt examples for the improvement of muſical notation, but theſe characters were cut out in blocks; the Germans, however, improved upon this practiſe, and that art ſeems to have arrived to ſomething like perfection about the year 1500, ſo that this improvement ſeemed ready for the uſe it was put to afterwards in ENGLAND; but it came to no perfection till about 1560, when a very induſtrious man, of the name of JOHN DAY, publiſhed the Church Service in four and three parts. His labours were a good deal accelerated by STERHOLD and HOPKINS; who, in addition to the novelty of introducing their New Verſion of the Pſalms, brought forth the Cantiones of TALLIS and BIRD, two names of ſufficient con-

ſequence to ſhew the reputation of muſic at that time, their Anthems at this moment being held very highly in eſteem, as to their ingenuity, admitted among the common cathedral ſtock, and as well known as the works of any other church compoſers *.

This DAY moſt induſtriouſly and laudably, together with another printer of the name of VAUTROLLIER, brought to public view whatever could be found of value, and, therefore, I ſhould not wonder, though the fact cannot be aſcertained, that many of the madrigals, aſcribed to the com-

* The hiſtory of Pſalmody at that time ſets us perfectly clear as to the nature of the melodies then known and admired in ENGLAND. The Pſalm tunes, or at leaſt many of them, came from the Germans; and when STERNHOLD and HOPKINS publiſhed their Verſion, with the tunes ſet forth in types, they from them and from the Engliſh compoſers got together a great number of thoſe tunes. Theſe, up to this moment, fix the criterion of that melody which is the moſt ſimple, the moſt impreſſive, and the moſt ſublime, becauſe it conſiſts of a few notes, and nothing can be advanced to invalidate the antiquity of thoſe tunes, becauſe, the beſt in the collection, the hundredth Pſalm, was compoſed by MARTIN LUTHER, and is literally a melody derived from inſpiration, and clogged with no extraneous harmony; but merely aſſiſted by ſuch modulation as the melody itſelf dictated. So that, as far as it goes, we ſee the utmoſt of muſical perfection in LUTHER; for I'll venture to ſay, that we might name fifty muſicians, and ſome that we have heard praiſed too, whoſe works altogether, in point of intrinſic merit, are not equal in value to the hundredth Pſalm. LUTHER died in 1546.

posers of that time, are in fact of a much earlier date.

Day and Vautrollier were succeeded by Thomas Este; who, for some reason or other, changed his name to Snodham. Bird and Morley were afterwards granted a patent as sole and exclusive printers of music. This patent was assigned to others; but printed music came to no perfection, except merely as to the form of the notes, till it was stampt and engraved*.

Gathering assistance from printing, writers on music were now better enabled to exemplify their arguments, and in consequence we became more familiar with them and their works. Musicians took their degrees at the universities, and their merit was known, and decided. German and Italian productions spread over Europe, and it became then a positive and fixed point, as it has ever since remained, that Italy was the school for vocal music, and Germany the school for instrumental music.

* The art of printing music with metal types obtained in Italy about 1516, and was carried to some perfection by Ottavio de Petricci; and, in France, it was improved by Pierre Ballard. The Germans, however, were, no doubt, the inventors of types, although music had been long printed in Italy with blocks, which, after all, gives the truest idea of music as it is now printed.

England, in addition to its own native melodies; which, like the minds of its inhabitants, facinate by their open and unaffected manner of appealing to the heart, adopted whatever might ſerve to aſſiſt muſic from foreign aid; and it has ever been a rule with all real muſical judges, that the vocal muſic of this country has received advantage from the Italian ſchool, and the inſtrumental from the German, and that whenever the contrary has been attempted, which has happened but too often, to the creation of ſchiſms and controverſies out of number, taſte has been vitiated, and nature and the heart have been ſacrificed at the ſhrine of affectation and caprice.

The works of Aron, Ramis, Agricola, and other German writers, have dived into all the perplexity of harmony. Agricola, in particular, ſo loſt himſelf in his own labyrinth, that, in the republication of his famous work, called *Muſica Inſtrumentales*, he confeſſes to a friend that the firſt edition was ſo difficult to be underſtood, that few could read it to any advantage, and yet this author is ſaid to have written for young beginners. He would not, however, have apologized to his friend if he had lived in theſe times; for the practice ſtill prevails, and young beginners are ſet down to ſtudy what nobody can underſtand without any apo-

logy at all; but the beſt part of the ſtory is that this abſtruſe treatiſe, publiſhed for the uſe of young beginners, which the author confeſſes that few could underſtand, is written in verſe. It is a pity, while he was about it, but he had ſet it to muſic, and ſo joined impoſſible precept with impracticable example.

The Italians, who were celebrated in the ſixteenth century, have left behind them ſeveral works of conſiderable reputation. ZARLINO, PALESTRINA, MARENZIO, NANINO, and ANERIO are among this number; and, to ſhew that the faſcinating power of muſic can level all diſtinctions, the Prince DI VENOSA was muſical rival and competitor to SETHUS CALVISIUS, the ſon of a peaſant. SALINAS and MORALES, though both Spaniards, as they knew nothing but what they imbibed from the Italian ſchool, ought, properly ſpeaking, to be claſſed with the Italian writers.

ZARLINO, who was born in 1540, was intended by his parents for ſome learned profeſſion, and by nature for any ſtudy of which the human mind is capable; but muſic bounded his ambition. He was maeſtro di capella of St. MARK's Church, and compoſed ſeveral celebrated things, and in particular the rejoicings at VENICE upon the defeat of the Turks at LEPANTO.

By having poſſeſſed much good ſenſe and treaſured up a fund of general knowledge, ZARLINO felt himſelf more competent to ſpeak on the ſubject of muſic than any writer of his time, and this is clearly proved by what he has given to the world, for he has entered into no pityful controverſies but gone at large into his theme. He at once traces muſic back to the Greeks, and from the Greeks to nature its original parent; and thus, while he ſhews as much competency to argue as BOETIUS, and all the other Latin and Italian writers, he adds arguments of his own to ſhew that the dignity of muſic is derived from its ſimplicity.

GALILEI the pupil ſo **ZARLINO**, ſet himſelf up againſt his maſter, calling him the corrupter of muſic, and ZARLINO anſwered GALILEI in a ſtrain of cool irony, in which he calls him his loving diſciple. The queſtion in diſpute was concerning the diviſion of tones, which it would be both improper and unneceſſary to explain here. The eſſence of the argument was that ZARLINO was an advocate for nature and his pupil for art, and it is remarkable that the partizans on each ſide have ſettled the queſtion in favour of muſic and ZARLINO, one by the ſtrength and the other by the weakneſs of their arguments, the firſt of which has obtained to this day, and the latter long ſunk into oblivion.

SALINAS, whose soul was music, wrote very warmly on his favourite theme. The misfortune is that music is so extensive an expression that you may apply it to any thing; and thus, by stretching the qualities it really possesses, its admirers, out of zeal, attempt to fit them to what they cannot embrace; thus, at length, they quit music for proportion, and at last, proportion for calculation, so that sound, without which there cannot be music, is put out of the question, and the argument becomes a mere wrangle upon paper.

SALINAS was blind, and he gives this as the reason for devoting himself to music. His own words are, "From my very infancy I devoted myself to "to the study of music; for, as I had sucked in "blindness from the infected milk of my nurse, and "there remaining not the least hope that I should "ever recover my sight, my parents could think of "no employment so proper for me as that which "was now suitable to my situation, as the learning "necessary for it might be acquired by the sense of "hearing, that other best servant of a soul endued "with reason."

PALESTRINA took a likely career to become a good musician, not for scholars, but for the world;

for he ſtudied under a ſinger in the pontifical chapel, who eſtabliſhed a ſchool for vocal muſic, and thus having originally imbibed melody, he made it the ground work of all his ſtudies.

"This great genius," ſays an Italian author, "guided by a peculiar faculty, the gift of GOD, "adopted a ſtyle of harmony ſo elegant, ſo noble, "ſo learned, ſo eaſy, and ſo pleaſing, both to the "connoiſeur and the ignorant, that in a maſs, com- "compoſed on purpoſe, ſung before Pope MAR- "CELLUS CERVINUS, and the ſacred college of "cardinals, he made that pontiff alter the intention "he had of enforcing the bull of JOHN the twenty- "ſecond, which aboliſhed entirely church muſic, "under the penalty of excommunication. This "ingenious man, by his aſtoniſhing ſkill, and the di- "vine melody of that maſs, was appointed by PAUL "the fourth, perpetual compoſer and director in "the pontifical chapel; a dignity which has been "vacant ever ſince his death. This maſs was "now and ever will be performed as long as there "is a world in the ſacred temples at ROME, and at "all other places where they have been ſo fortu- "nate as to procure the compoſitions of ſuch a "wonderful genius, whoſe works breathe divine "harmony, and enable us to ſing in a ſtyle ſo truly "ſublime the praiſes of our maker."

PALESTRINA no doubt carried into better effect the idea of ZARLINO, taking ſimplicity and nature for his guide; and I think there can be but little doubt that from this period the Italian and German ſchools adopted the ſtudies which have ſince ſeparately diſtinguiſhed them, PALESTRINA having in his works cured the Italians of obſtruſeneſs by expoſing the corrupt errors of the Germans, who having little genius ſubſtituted art for nature, and they, conſcious of their inability, having quietly acquieſced in the deciſion, and contented themſelves with phlegmatic harmonies, ſquared and calculated, diveſted of melody, and, therefore, like a body without a ſoul, while rich melody and the ſimple and dignified harmony that naturally belongs to it marked the productions of the Italians.

NANINO, was a fellow ſtudent of PALESTRINA. They between them eſtabliſhed a ſchool for the ſtudy of muſic, which was frequented by many eminent profeſſors, and particularly by a younger brother of NANINO, who diſtinguiſhed himſelf as a wonderful genius, NANINO, the elder, publiſhed ſome very fine madrigals.

ANERIO, a diſciple of NANINO, was the immediate ſucceſſor of PALESTRINA as compoſer to the pontifical chapel, the office of director having died

with its excluſive poſſeſſor. His profeſſional character ſtood very high, and he as well as VELETTRI, PONTIO, VECCHI, and others, produced many muſical compoſitions of great celebrity.

But of all the Italian compoſers in the ſixteenth century, MARENZIO is moſt generally known to us, many of whoſe madrigals were adapted to Engliſh words, and publiſhed by THOMAS WATSON in 1589, in a work called *Muſica Tranſalpina;* among theſe are "Farewell cruel and unkind," "What "doth my pretty darling," "Sweet ſinging AMA-"RYLLIS," and "I muſt depart all hapleſs." With MARENZIO I ſhall finiſh this ſummary account of the Italian and German ſchools, although there are are more than ninety other names behind of much celebrity.

It is remarkable, that except ITALY, GERMANY, FLANDERS, and ENGLAND, muſic had made no conſiderable progreſs in the ſixteenth century. SPAIN had produced only MORALES and SALINAS, and theſe were fairly of the Italian ſchool, and in FRANCE we hear of DE PREZ, MOUTON, CREQUILLON, and CLAUDE, but nothing is known of them worthy of being recorded.

In ENGLAND, TYE, BIRD, BULL, and DOW-

LAND, were long in ſuch high eſtimation that it has been contended they were equal to the beſt muſicians of any country. MARBECK, however, was the earlieſt of the Engliſh compoſers of any conſiderable eminence; who, after having narrowly eſcaped the ſtake for hereſy, or according to FOX, after having actually ſuffered, he became indefatigable to reform muſic with religion. Indeed the cathedral muſical ſervice of the Church of England was originally framed by MARBECK, and the notes of the preces, ſuffrages, and reſponſes, as they are at this day, were of his compoſition.

TYE was brought up in the Chapel Royal, and muſical preceptor to the children of HENRY the eighth. He was a man of learning; and, after taking the degree of Doctor in Muſic at CAMBRIDGE, was incorporated a member of the Univerſity of OXFORD. He was afterwards organiſt to the Chapel Royal of ELIZABETH, and was the firſt who compoſed anthems.

This was occaſioned by a kind of accident. He ſet the Acts of the Apoſtles to muſic; but, the ſubject being principally narrative and relation, it clearly had nothing to do with muſic, and, therefore, did not ſucceed. Correcting his error, he then turned his thoughts to ſuch words in ſcripture as

might anſwer his purpoſe; and, recollecting that the Pſalms of DAVID are full of that thankſgiving, and that ebullition of the heart which muſic is ſo particularly calculated to expreſs, he made ſome eſſays in this way, which were not only received with great encomiums by their hearers, but they have ſerved ever ſince as a model for the imitation of compoſers in that ſtyle.

WOOD, ſpeaking of TYE, ſays his muſic was antiquated and of very little value; but BOYCE, with the true liberality of a real genius, refutes this calumny in the beſt poſſible way by publiſhing one of his anthems, "I will exalt thee," which for melody, harmony, expreſſion, contrivance, and general effect, is a perfect model of church compoſition.

TALLIS followed TYE. He compoſed wholly for the church; indeed he has been called the father of the cathedral ſtyle, and conſidered by ſome as a better compoſer than PALESTRINA; who, as we have ſeen, was his cotemporary. This, however, muſt not be allowed. No man could be more original than TALLIS, as we are told; but this is not the proper expreſſion, unleſs originality may be defined an improvement on the labours of others, for TALLIS built his muſic upon the foundation of

the old Engliſh cathedral compoſers, and the Germans, all of whom he excelled; but this cannot be conſidered as that ſort of originality which PALESTRINA's biographer properly calls the gift of GOD; and thus it is that while TALLIS was loſt in the ancient modes, deſignated by EUCLID and PTOLEMY, which are now exploded, PALESTRINA was inſpired with the melody of nature which will laſt for ever.

BIRD, in the earlier part of his life wholly compoſed church muſic; but, when madrigals became to be ſo greatly in vogue that no perſon was eſteemed faſhionable who could not take a part in them at ſight*, he conformed to the taſte of the times. To confirm this the firſt of his publications was called, "Pſalms, Songs, and Sonets "of Sadneſs and Piety," and his laſt, "Songs and "Sonets, ſome ſolemne, others joyful, formed to "the Life of the Words."

* MORLEY in his introduction makes a ſcholar give this reaſon for learning muſic, "Being at a banquet," ſays he, "ſupper being "ended, and muſic books, according to cuſtom, being brought on "the table, the miſtreſs of the houſe preſented me with a part and "earneſtly requeſted me to ſing; but when, after many excuſes, "I proteſted unfeignedly that I could not, every one began to wonder, "yea, ſome whiſpered to others demanding how I was brought up. "So that for ſhame of mine ignorance I now go to ſeek mine old "friend maſter GNORIMUS to make myſelf his ſcholar."

Beſides madrigals and merry ſonnets, BIRD ſeems to have been the firſt who compoſed leſſons for the virginals, which conſiſted of nothing more than variations on well known country dances; ſo that the modern practice of compoſers who adopt the melodies of others becauſe they have no invention themſelves, have done nothing new in palming this ſecond hand ware upon their ſcholars.

It was meritorious enough, however, in BIRD, for his buſineſs at that early time was to bring ſimple melodies into faſhion, and thus we ſee ladies of quality patronizing familiar muſic, till by and by it grew ſo ſimplified that many of thoſe beautiful airs which we now admire in the *Beggars Opera*, fixed the criterion of the Engliſh taſte.

In a collection of theſe leſſons, which were dedicated to lady NEVILLE, and compoſed for her uſe, and which we are told, though produced at that early period, are very difficult to execute, he has rung the changes on "St. Leger," or as it is commonly called, "Sellenger's Round," "Have with "you to Walſingham," "The World runs on "Wheels," Packington Pound," and ſome others; all which together with his two celebrated madrigals, "La Verginella e Simile un Roſa," and "This ſweet and merry month of May," ſhew that

Bird muſt have done a great deal towards poliſhing the general taſte for muſic.

After all, however, church muſic and works of the learned caſt were principally the favourite ſtudy of Bird; though, except in a few inſtances, poſterity will have more obligations to him for his lighter compoſitions, notwithſtanding many learned opinions to the contrary. His ſervice which, with a diligence honourable to himſelf and his profeſſion, was preſerved by Boyce, and ſome other compoſitions are greatly creditable to this compoſer.

But the production that has eſtabliſhed the reputation of Bird, I hope, upon a right foundation, is the famous Canon, "Non nobis Domine." The Italians poſitively ſay that it is the compoſition of Palestrina; it is allowed on all hands that it has been long depoſited in the Vatican Library, and thoſe who argue on this ſide of the queſtion maintain their poſition by ſaying that the ſubject was wrought into a concerto and publiſhed at Amsterdam by Carlo Ricciotti, with a note mentioning that the fugue is taken from a Canon of Palestrina. Now, unfortunately, this concerto is extant and the fugue is worked from Non nobis Domine, and, if the general ideas of an ingenious man may

be adduced as evidence in his favour, the compoſition of PALESTRINA beginning "Sicut cervus "deſiderat," and the canon in queſtion ſeem to have emanated from the ſame mind.

On the ſide of BIRD it is argued that HILTON has poſitively publiſhed this canon as his, and Dr. PEPUSCH, whoſe reſearches certainly were very diligent and uſeful, has aſcribed it to him in a very unqualified manner, and beſides this, collateral proof has been brought that it was the natural bent of BIRD's diſpoſition, and that, though he did now and then make variations upon country dances to oblige lady NEVILLE, church muſic and compoſitions of the more ſerious kind were his beſt delight, and what he was moſt qualified for. They are, however, obliged to allow that it was never publiſhed in any of his works; which, as it is ſo admirable a compoſition is not only unfortunate but rather extraordinary, and thus it remains a moot point whether BIRD or PALESTRINA was the compoſer of Non nobis Domine.

I ſhall next mention FERABOSCO; who, though of Italian parents, was born in ENGLAND. MORLEY ſpeaks very highly of his merit and ſays that he and BIRD had many friendly trials of ſkill in muſic. In two inſtances FERABOSCO bore away the palm,

one of theſe begins with the words, "The nightin-"gale ſo pleaſant and ſo gay," and the other, "I "ſaw my lady weeping."

Indeed Engliſh muſic has many obligations to this man, his ſon, and another of his family. Many of our beſt melodies which PEPUSH ſo judiciouſly ſelected for the Beggars Opera are ſuppoſed to have ariſen from that ſource, and thoſe in the minuet ſtyle in particular have ſo ſimple and pure an elegance, that as long as there is a world, as PALESTRINA's panegyriſt ſays, that world will be delighted with them.

BLITHEMAN, whom STOW in his ſurvey not only has thought it worth his while to mention by name, but of whom he has printed the epitaph at length, was alſo celebrated at this time, but more as a teacher than a compoſer. The whiteſt feather, however, in his wing was his being preceptor to Dr. BULL, whoſe chriſtian name, by the bye, was JOHN, He was a celebrated muſician admitted firſt as Bachelor of Muſic at OXFORD, afterwards as Doctor at CAMBRIDGE, and, at length, appointed organiſt of the Queen's Chapel.

BULL was the firſt Greſham profeſſor of muſic; being, however, as his chriſtian name beſpeaks him

a plain Engliſhman, he was unable to read his lectures in Latin. The queen, therefore, gave him an eſpecial permiſſion to deliver them in Engliſh, for which ſhe has been ridiculed under an abſurd idea that if he did not know Latin he could not know muſic.

JOHN, ſtill like a true Engliſhman, travelled for improvement; and, having heard of a famous muſician at St. OMER's, he placed himſelf under him as a novice, but he ſoon found, as is generally the truth in ſuch caſes, that he knew more than his maſter. Among other proofs of this, the muſician ſhewed him a ſong that he had compoſed in forty parts, telling him at the ſame time that he would defy all the world to produce any perſon capable of adding another part to his compoſition. BULL deſired to be left alone and to be indulged for a ſhort time with pen and ink, and in leſs than three hours added forty parts more to this ſong, upon which the Frenchman ſwore in a great extacy that he muſt be either the Devil or JOHN BULL.

Whether the muſician had heard of the ſtory of ERASMUS and Sir THOMAS MORE, or whether as it has happened in many other caſes he felt the influence of JOHN BULL's ſuperiority, has not exactly been aſcertained, but the hiſtorian inſiſts that, though

a prieſt, upon BULL's making himſelf known, he actually fell down and adored him.

DOWLAND, of whom SHAKESPEAR ſpeaks in one of his poems, was a good compoſer, and a famous player on the lute. He was a great traveller, and his paſſion being muſic, he brought back the taſte of other countries into this, and thus added ſome variety to the lighter compoſitions which were then the delight of all ſocieties.

PETER PHILIPS who becauſe he ſtudied abroad italianized his name into PIETRO PHILIPPI, was conſidered as an admirable muſician. He certainly improved the Engliſh taſte by ſending over airs from ITALY. Indeed ENGLAND was greatly obliged to theſe ramblers, for by importing now and then a little of the Italian taſte they better guarded their countrymen againſt the incurſions of the Germans, whoſe arithmetical muſic ſometimes gained ground, to the corruption of that truth and nature which in this country was at that time really felt and underſtood.

MORLEY, who was a pupil of BIRD, wrote a treatiſe on muſic through which we get a good deal at the profeſſors and admirers of that art, and their abilities and taſte. It is written dialogue-wiſe; and

in the courſe of the converſations between the interlocutors, many particulars occur relative to the times, which clearly ſhew the merit of muſic and the eſtimation it was then held in.

Morley intends this treatiſe for reproof as well as inſtruction; for, knowing the inconvenience of ſtudying ſcientifically as it is called, how much it bewilders the imagination, and makes that a toil which only ought to be a pleaſure, he warns his ſcholars againſt venturing too far. "What would "you learn?" Says the maſter. The ſcholar ſays he has heard a friend of his who is the beſt deſcanter in the world, and begs he may be taught deſcant. The maſter anſwers that it will require time and patience, that the word is hardly defined, and, in ſhort, does what he can to diſſuade him from it, but to no purpoſe; deſcant was the foppery of muſic then, juſt as cadence and the falcetto are now, and nothing will ſatisfy the ſcholar but deſcant.

What occaſioned this treatiſe was the madrigal, which was held in ſuch eſtimation that it was a reproach, as we have ſeen before, not to know how to take a part in it. Cards, and games of chance, were at that time totally unknown; and, without reproach to the preſent day, muſic was certainly a very inoffenſive ſubſtitute at leaſt. Thus innu-

merable collections of theſe madrigals were given to the world by their reſpective authors, and this emulation, in the very way that was likely to make muſic generally known and admired, fixed its reputation.

Morley is very properly ſevere on all thoſe innovators who, conſcious of their own ignorance, endeavour to prevent the true and natural operation of muſic. "Thus they go on," ſays he, giving true definitions and falſe examples; the example ſtill "importing the contrary to that which was ſaid "in the definition. But this is the world; every "one will take upon him to write and teach others, "none having more need of teaching than himſelf." He finiſhes his treatiſe with an account of thirty-nine different compoſers, who had flouriſhed before and at the time of the reformation.

After theſe which I have mentioned, followed other muſicians of eminence. Bathe wrote a treatiſe in which he did good towards the meaſurement of muſic. Weekes and Mundy compoſed madrigals which are yet known. Farnaby was a compoſer of ſome credit, and Milton, the father of our celebrated epic poet, was from nature a muſician. There are many things extant of his compoſition; among the reſt the celebrated pſalm tune

called "The York," the melody of which is ſo well known that "half the nurſes in the kingdom," ſays an author, "have conſtantly uſed it as a lullaby, "and the chimes of many country churches have "played it from time immemorial."

Bateson, Wylbie, Bennet, Farmer, and about thirteen others, alſo compoſed and publiſhed madrigals, at the head of which ſet ought to be placed Orlando Gibbons, and Michael Este, whoſe particular merits may be reſorted to by a peruſal of ſeveral collections of madrigals, and in particular "The Triumphs of Oriana," which was publiſhed in 1601.

CHAP. XI.

SCOTCH AND IRISH MUSIC.

HAVING ſo far digreſſed to ſpeak of Engliſh muſic, I ſhall, I hope, be pardoned if I take this opportunity of ſaying ſomething on the ſubject of Scotch and Iriſh muſic, in which I ſhall take up, as briefly as poſſible, ſome of theſe arguments which have been held out with a view to aſcertain their origin, and add the beſt conjectures I have been able myſelf to form on the ſubject.

The common opinion as to the muſic of SCOTLAND is that it was brought over from ITALY by RIZZIO. This cannot be altogether true, and yet I can ſee nothing to convince me that it is altogether falſe. Thoſe who write in favour of this argument ſay that RIZZIO, being retained in the ſervice of the unfortunate MARY as a muſician, and finding the muſic of the country capable of improvement he ſet himſelf down to give it poliſh and re-

finement, keeping ſtill in view, as far as he could, without trenching on the rules of art, that immethodical and crude melody which he found in the country.

Againſt this it has been urged that the authority for the above aſſertion reſts merely on tradition, and that there is much written proof to refute it; that Sir JAMES MELVIL, who knew RIZZIO perſonally, ſays he was nothing more than a merry fellow and a good muſician; that he was drawn in ſometimes to ſing with the valets of the queen, and on that account, when her French ſecretary retired to FRANCE, RIZZIO was appointed ſecretary in his place.

MELVIL is obliged to allow however that RIZZIO engroſſed the favour of the queen, that he was ſuſpected of being a penſioner to the Pope, and that by the part he took in all public tranſactions he gave riſe to the troubles of SCOTLAND, and precipitated the ruin of his miſtreſs.

BUCHANAN confirms all this, and indeed goes more at large into the ſubject; and, from theſe premiſes it is inferred that the ambitious and intriguing ſpirit of RIZZIO left him neither inclination nor opportunity for ſtudy, and, therefore, that it was very unlikely

he ſhould attempt a reformation or improvement of the Scotch muſic, eſpecially as he had only two years to perform the taſk in.

To anſwer theſe arguments, as far as they have gone, it muſt be confeſſed there is nothing yet advanced to ſhew that RIZZIO did not improve the muſic of SCOTLAND. If MELVIL, who ſpeaking of his ſuperficial character, finds him only a merry fellow and a good muſician, is obliged to allow that he had this intriguing ſpirit, that he was a penſioner of the Pope, and that he, in great meaſure, occaſioned the troubles of SCOTLAND, is it very unlikely that his command over the queen aroſe from the opportunities he had of adminiſtering to her pleaſures, one of which was muſic? BUCHANAN ſays, that he became abſorbed in the intrigues of the court, and roſe to the higheſt degree of favour and confidence, in the management of which power he behaved with ſuch arrogance and contempt, as to render himſelf odious to all about him.

During all this time, however, we do not find that he quitted his favourite lure, which little agreed with favour, confidence, and power. He was ſtill a ſinger of madrigals and Scotch ſongs, and he was even at this employment when he was dragged from the queen and aſſaſinated.

But to go further with this examination. It is inſiſted on that the origin of the Scotch melodies are to be derived from a higher ſource than RIZZIO without having recourſe to the Italians at all. I ſhall tread this ground a little, though I fancy we ſhall not find it very firm for the firſt poſition in which we ſhall be obliged to ſtand will be rather awkward, and what's worſe dangerous.

We are told to believe an Italian writer who roundly aſſerts that ſome of the fineſt vocal muſic this country can boaſt of owes its merit, in a great meaſure to its affinity with that of Scotland. He might have added, and *vice verſa*, becauſe none but exotic beauties are ever tranſplanted. This argument is ſuſtained by a relation that JOHN, the archchanter from ROME, ſettled among the Northumbrians, and the propenſity of that people to muſic, whoſe ſequeſtered ſituation, and the little intercourſe they muſt be ſuppoſed to have held with the adjacent countries, will account for a ſtyle of muſic perfectly original, and which might, in proceſs of time, extend itſelf to the neighbouring kingdom.

Thus an Italian archchanter, who never in his life had heard a note of Scotch muſic, comes midway between ENGLAND and SCOTLAND, delights the ſequeſtered inhabitants with a new kind of muſic he

had brought with him, Italian of courſe, and we are deſired from this very clear account, given alſo by an Italian, to believe that not only the muſic he taught was natively Scotch, but that it ſpread itſelf into ENGLAND, and improved the muſic there.

The real fact is evident and ſtares us in the face. This archchanter to whom both nations are very much obliged, perfect in the principles of ZARLINO and PALESTRINO, improved both the native melodies of the Engliſh and the Scotch, which ſufficiently required it, and which could not take a brighter poliſh than from the Italian ſchool.

A higher and more rational authority makes JAMES STUART, the firſt of his name, and the hundred and ſecond in the liſt of the kings of SCOTLAND, author and compoſer of Scotch ſongs. BUCHANAN ſays that he was ſkilled in muſic more than was neceſſary or fitting for a king, for there was no inſtrument on which he could not play ſo well as to contend with the greateſt maſters of the art in thoſe days.

That JAMES was a poet is univerſally agreed; and, among many other authorities, ALESSANDRO TASSONI has this paſſage in a work of his upon various ſubjects. "We may reckon among the

" modern muſicians JAMES, king of SCOTLAND,
" who not only compoſed ſacred poems ſet to muſic,
" but alſo of himſelf invented a new melancholy
" and plaintive kind of muſic different from all
" other; in which he has been imitated by CARLO
" GESUALDO, prince of VENOSA, who in theſe
" our times has improved muſic with new and ad-
" mirable compoſitions."

Now here is fairly a reciprocal intercourſe between the Scotch and the Italian muſic, even back to the middle of the fifteenth century, when this poliſhed king could not be unknown to the family of MEDICIS, or they to him. What does all this ſay, but that muſic, as well as every other ſtudy, is originally vernacular every where but, like intelligence of every kind, it acquires perfection by intercourſe.

JAMES did not invent Scotch muſic, nor did the archchanter, nor did RIZZIO, that is to ſay, the muſic which we at this moment call Scotch. The original muſic in SCOTLAND has been ſimply but practically defined by every maſter who has, by way of a trick, taught his ſcholar to hop over the ſharps and the flats of a harpſichord. The accidental wildneſs with which this experiment impreſſes you I have no doubt gives a tolerably correct idea of the ſtate of the Scotch muſic as it was found by JAMES'

who, having natural taſte, and an intercourſe with courts, refined it in ſome degree. After him comes JOHN, the archchanter, who rubs off a few more of the hardneſſes, and, at length, RIZZIO, who was an Italian muſician, and the ſon of an Italian muſician, and he adds a new foreign poliſh in compliment to a queen who loved every thing that was foreign, and who was at that moment intriguing with foreign courts.

Thus I come to my firſt poſition, that the aſſertion of RIZZIO's have brought what is called Scotch muſic from Italy is not altogether true, nor altogether falſe. The tunes which are beſt acknowledged and moſt admired are clearly a mixture of Scotch and Italian. Have "Tweed Side," or "Laſs "of Patie's Mill," any thing in them of ſkipping from ſharps to flats? Nothing at all. They are ſimple, beautiful, flowing melodies that, though grounded on the Scotch character, are treated in the Italian ſtyle, which has benefited muſic all over the world, and will be ever the regulation for elegance in the hands of compoſers, but of thoſe alone, who know to make uſe of Italian principles and not deſtroy the native character of muſic in their own country.

As to the Iriſh muſic, there is no doubt but its

native wildneſs has been in the ſame manner corrected by the introduction of Italian improvement, which it ſeems to receive in even a more congenial manner than the Scotch. "Lango Lee," and "The "Dargle," are, as melodies, perhaps, equal to any thing in the world, but no one will aſſert that any thing ſo beautifully perfect, ſo ſatisfactory to the mind, can poſſibly be natively Iriſh, crude and indigeſted; yet the Iriſh character is ſo evident that without it all the true beauty of the air would be loſt.

It would be extremely eaſy to ſhew, by inſtancing a number of airs, how the Engliſh and Scotch ſtyle have been mixed together, the Scotch and Iriſh, the Iriſh and the Engliſh, and ſometimes all three, and with the ſame facility might it be made evident that the Italian ſtyle has pervaded them all, but the attempt has hardly ever been undertaken by any man of real genius.

Thus having, by way of illuſtrating my primary ſubject, a treſpaſs for which I hope I ſhall be pardoned, ſhewn the ſtate of the arts in ENGLAND at the death of ELIZABETH; when ſcience, commerce, and legiſlation, were at their higheſt pitch of grandeur, when divinity borrowed luſtre from toleration, when law underwent regulation, when

hiſtory adopted perſpicuity, when poetry was the reſult of genius, when philoſophy acquired ſublimity, when painting fled to ENGLAND as to an aſylum, and muſic humbly tendered its mite to make up this weight of perfection; in ſhort, when ſuch men as BACON, SHAKESPEAR, SPENCER, COKE, and RALEIGH, dignified their country; I ſhall next proceed to ſhew how far this accumulation of extraordinary talents ſerved for an example to dramatic writers in the ſucceeding reign.

END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

BOOK VI.

FROM THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH TO THE DEATH OF JAMES.

CHAP. I.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

HAVING ſeen how completely SHAKESPEAR ſoared above all competition while he had only JONSON, CHAPMAN, MARLOE, MARSTON, and the reſt to encounter in the reign of ELIZABETH, let us ſee how well he kept his ground, when in addition to theſe, he had to cope with BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, MASSINGER, and other authors, who were candidates for dramatic fame during thirteen years of the reign of JAMES the firſt, at the end of which time the world had the misfortune to loſe our incomparable bard; a calamity which would have been irreparable had not poſterity lain its proud claim to his wonderful productions.

BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, with many fair pretenſions to theatrical reputation, never could

fix a foundation ſolid enough to eſtabliſh that ſort of fame which commands legitimate ſuffrage upon the ſpot, and challenges the award of poſterity. They were rather amateurs than writers, rather gentlemen than profeſſors; yet has the ſtage many obligations to them which ſhall be faithfully enumerated.

BEAUMONT, who was well born and educated, was certainly a man of great talents and ſound judgment; which, however, would have been more manifeſt in his works had not his career been all ſpeed without reſt. He died in 1615, a year before the world loſt SHAKESPEAR, at which time he had not attained his thirtieth year, and yet between 1607 and that time, a ſpace of only eight years, he was concerned, as we are told, with FLETCHER in fifty-three plays.

FLETCHER was alſo well born and educated. He was ten years older than BEAUMONT, and lived ten years longer, but he does not ſeem to have written any thing material either before or after his literary connection with that gentleman; for, in all we know of the works of theſe partners in fame, only a ſingle piece was written by each, that by BEAUMONT was called *The Maſque of Grays Inn*, and that by FLETCHER, *The Faithfull Shepherdeſs*.

The ſhare each took in their joint labours has been pretty well aſcertained. BEAUMONT, who though the youngeſt man had the ſoundeſt judgment, formed and digeſted the plots, wrote the more intereſting and ſerious parts, and pruned the luxuriancies, of which there ſeems to have been ſufficient need, for even at this moment when a revival of one of their plays is attempted it is obliged to be cut, even to mutilation *.

Taken as dramatic productions, the works of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER can only be conſidered as having a partial claim to reputation. They have ſtrong particular merit, but, taking them altogether, there is ſcarcely a play but is extravagant, wild, and ill managed. Moſt of the plots are Spaniſh, and ſeems as if they thought that when they had lopped off part of the luxuriance of *Lopez de Vega*, they had done enough, whereas they ſhould not have left

* There is a well known anecdote which proves that FLETCHER had ſometimes a hand in forming their plots as well as BEAUMONT. Having concerted the plan of a tragedy over a bottle, they ſettled which part of the play they ſhould reſpectively take; which, being perfectly adjuſted, "Well," ſaid FLETCHER, "it ſhall be ſo, you "manage the reſt and I'll undertake to kill the king." Theſe words being overheard by the waiter, they were preſently ſurrounded and made priſoners; but, their characters being well known, and their having it in their power eaſily to prove that they only meditated the aſſaſination of a theatrical monarch, the whole went off as a jeſt.

a twig, but have let the new ſhoots have gained their ſtrength by ſpringing at once from the ſtock.

This, however, was not the caſe. FLETCHER not only added to the extravagance of the Spaniard wild and excentric wit of his own, but perpetually tinctured it with obſcenity, and the operation has been, that, whenever the manners at any period ſince that time have been looſe and profligate, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER have been the reigning favourites, witneſs the eſtimation in which they were held in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond, when, an indelible diſgrace to that monarch and his court, they obtained even to the excluſion of SHAKESPEAR. But let us take a curſory review of their works.

The Woman Hater, a comedy which appeared in 1607, is a play of ſome merit, it is ſtrange that two writers ſhould ſtart with a piece the principal character in which, if it is not, ought to be out of nature. BEAUMONT is ſuppoſed to have been almoſt wholly the author of this production. It was pretty ſucceſsful, both when it came out and afterwards when it was revived by ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT.

The Knight of the burning Peſtle, a ſtrange play which has ſome beauties and a thouſand defects,

was produced in 1611. Its grand fault is, that, like JONSON's *Every Man out of his Humour*, it was conveyed to the audience through the medium of a grex. This play was revived after the reſtoration with a new prologue ſpoken by NEL GWYN, at which time licentiouſneſs was a ſtrong recommendation to public favour, but it had never any material ſucceſs.

Cupid's Revenge, a tragedy, performed by the Children of the Revels, contained ſome very good poetry, but the plot and machinery were ſo abſurd and ridiculous that it had but very indifferent ſucceſs.

The Scornful Lady, a comedy brought out in 1616, is a production of ſome merit, and has more regularity than is generally found in the plays of theſe authors. There is ſomething, however, very inartificial in the management of the plot, and particularly the converſion of MORECRAFT the uſurer, which is certainly forced and unnatural.

King and no King, a tragedy, performed in 1619, has been variouſly criticiſed. RYMER has handled it very ſeverely, for which, taking it altogether as a play, he had but too much reaſon. DRYDEN has been, however, leſs harſh; and, indeed the general

objections againſt the plays of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, being the extraneous matter and humour introduced into their plots, and the licentiouſneſs of their wit, which DRYDEN, was obliged a good deal to conform to, might occaſion him to be as merciful as poſſible, and to ſeperate the moraliſt from the critic, leſt in caſtigating them he ſhould whip himſelf; while RYMER, who was bound by no ſuch conſideration, reprobated what was unworthy without heſitation.

The Maid's Tragedy, produced in 1622. Its ſucceſs both then and ſince has been reputable. It has, however, ſo much of that extravagance and irregularity for which theſe authors are remarkable, that it has been a ſtranger to the ſtage for many years.

Thierry and Theodoret, performed in 1621. This is one of theſe hetrogeneous compoſitions of which there are too many in the works of theſe authors. It has ten blemiſhes for one beauty, and upon the whole is poorly conſtructed, and but indifferently written.

Philaſter. This tragedy came out in 1622, and added conſiderably to the reputation of theſe authors. Indeed it has always been juſtly eſteemed

a work of conſiderable merit, and by many has been thought the beſt in all the catalogue of their works. On this account it has been revived, with alterations by the bye, at various periods. DRYDEN wrote a prologue when it was performed wholly by women at Lincoln Inn Fields, and SETTLE re-wrote the two laſt acts and brought it out in 1695. But the beſt opportunity *Philaſter* had for fame and ſucceſs was when COLMAN altered it to bring forward POWELL and Mrs. YATES, the particulars of which we ſhall hereafter go into. With all theſe advantages, however, *Philaſter*, from its own merit, has never been able to keep the ſtage for reaſons of a piece with all the reſt, becauſe it is full of beauties and defects, becauſe there is not one regular ſimple grand intereſt excited, and becauſe it is ingeniouſly made up of pieces inſtead of being one general whole.

The two Noble Kinſmen. This play is ſaid to have been written by SHAKESPEAR and FLETCHER, a circumſtance which the editor of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER ſeems to be greatly concerned about, probably out of tenderneſs for the reputation of FLETCHER, but he need not have made himſelf in the ſmalleſt degree uneaſy, for the play itſelf ſufficiently proves that SHAKESPEAR had no hand in it.

Indeed there is not much reputation to be claimed by any body, for the ſtory is CHAUCER's *Knights Tale*, which we have ſeen already treated by EDWARDS to the great delight of queen ELIZABETH. There is ſomething, however, gaudy and fine in it; and, like moſt of the works of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, it reſembles a parterre appearing ſo full of colours that form, and ſymetry are not once thought of. This play is ſaid to have been originally produced in 1634, an incongruity that is not very eaſily reconcileable, becauſe BEAUMONT died in 1615, and FLETCHER in 1625, and yet it is as difficult to believe that the plays produced by theſe aſſociates were performed during the life time of BEAUMONT, or even of FLETCHER, being fifty-three in number, and the term for the performance of them being only eight years in the firſt inſtance, and but eighteen in the laſt. I ſhall ſet down the dates, however, according to the beſt authorities, and theſe I take to be when they were firſt publiſhed, not when they were firſt performed.

The Elder Brother, the date 1637. This play, which is originally Spaniſh, is ſtrangely and wildly treated by BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, and indeed would have ſunk long ago into oblivion had not CIBBER taken it for one of the plots of his *Love*

makes a Man, a play we ſhall hereafter examine. The ground work is good, but the whole merit is due to the original writer.

Monſieur Thomas, the date 1639. Here we have ſome clue to ſet us right as to the time the pieces of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER were performed, but we cannot much rely on any thing we learn of theſe authors, for firſt we are told that they wrote conjointly all the plays publiſhed in their works, except *The Maſque of Grays Inn*, and *The Faithful Shepherdeſs*; we are afterward told that they were aſſiſted by SHAKESPEAR, by JONSON, by MIDDLETON, and other writers, and even this play FLETCHER is ſaid to have written after the death of BEAUMONT. There is nothing, however, in the preſent inſtance worth contending for. It is a very indifferent play, and, though publiſhed with great care by BROOME after FLETCHER's death, who dedicated it to COTTON, a great admirer of the author, and afterwards altered and got up by DURFEY, under the title of *Trick for Trick*, it never had ſucceſs. My drift is that, as this piece was originally brought out after the death of FLETCHER, ſo very probably many of the other productions were alſo, and this would a good deal invalidate the aſſertion that BEAUMONT was concerned in ſo many

of thoſe plays, writing as they did very often for the moment, and being both of them the ſort of character not very likely to lay in a ſtore of materials. This conjecture, however, we ſhall have opportunity more cloſely to examine as we go on.

Wit without Money, the date 1639. This comedy, being written with leſs extravagance and cloſer to nature than the pieces of theſe authors in general, it has longer kept the ſtage. There is, however, a ſlimzineſs in it that has always prevented it from being attractive. The comic muſe that preſided over the labours of theſe writers ſeems to have been one of thoſe ladies who are for ever either ſad, or in hyſterics. She ſeems to be unacquainted with a ſmile, the reſult of feeling, and the recommendation of the heart, ſhe is either muzzed with a vapid ſimper, or convulſed with a broad grin, and under this influence, when theſe gentlemen have attempted at mere nature, they have not been able to preſerve the milk in its native ſtate; their aſperity having turned it, by which means their humour is either hard like the curd, or mawkiſh like the whey. This play is a proof of it, which is well conceived and full of nature, but the circumſtances are not wrought high enough, nor do the characters ſufficiently come out of the canvaſs.

Rollo Duke of Normandy, the date 1640. This tragedy is ſaid to have been received with very great applauſe when it firſt appeared. It has, however, been long conſigned to oblivion, and indeed juſtly, for it is a turgid imitation of SENECA and JONSON, without fancy or ſpirit, or, indeed, any thing but heavy, declamatory dialogue, unaſſiſted by force or intereſt.

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, the date 1640. This play is well known, being one of the very few of thoſe written by BEAUMONT and FLETCHER which are now upon the theatrical ſtock liſt; intrinſically, however, this piece is no great acquiſition to the theatre, and it is at the riſk of a thin houſe that it is ever performed, unleſs bolſtered up with a new LEON, or an ESTIFANIA. The plot of this play though admirably imagined is poorly treated. There is ſomething very well, if it went no further, in reclaiming a vain coquette by placing her in the hands of a brave and manly huſband, but MARGUERETTA is an avowed wanton, whom it would have been a diſgrace to a man of ſuch a deſcription to have married, and after all LEON's claim to theſe noble qualities is very ill grounded, for he is the brother of his wife's waiting maid, and he tricks MARGUERETTE into the marriage by perſonating

an idiot, an art which a man of his ſpirit and honour would have diſdained. This has evidently thrown the authors into an unpleaſant predicament towards the end of the play; for, finding it impoſſible to excuſe themſelves naturally, they try to huſh up both the infamy of their heroine, and their own want of judgment in a ſummary way. Thus after MARGUETTA has played a hundred indecent tricks, and endeavoured to make her huſband's houſe a brothel, with all the forgiving good nature in the world, he takes her up and "wears her next his "heart."

The ſcenes of the COPPER CAPTAIN and ESTIFANIA, have a better claim to praiſe. They are highly comic, and the equivoque of the houſe which mixes the epiſode with the main deſign, is the happieſt thing in the piece. It is impoſſible to paſs over this article without uniting ſome degree, of pity with contempt at the fond idea of theſe authors, who in CACCAFOGO imagined they had outdone FALSTAFF.

The Mad Lover. This play as well as *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, and all the reſt that will now follow, were collected into an edition and publiſhed in 1647, ſo that it will be impoſſible to know

when they actually made their firſt appearance, nor is it material.

The Mad Lover, which play ſir ASTON COCKAIN has highly commended in a copy of verſes, is nevertheleſs a work of but mediocre merit. We know but little of its ſucceſs, and, indeed, it does not appear to have been at any time very familiar with the ſtage. It is partly borrowed from *Mundus and Paulina* in *Joſephus*.

The Spaniſh Curate. This play is a hetrogeneous jumble in the ſame ſtyle of many others in this collection. It has been pruned, altered, and amended, and fitted to the ſtage frequently by different authors, but never with any thing like ſucceſs, and yet there are good materials in it. It is taken from the *Don John*, and the *Spaniſh Curate*, of GERARDO.

The Little French Lawyer. This comedy is a mixture of the *Spaniſh Rogue*, and *Don Lewis de Caſtro*, and *Don Roderigo de Montalva*, which SCARRON has alſo treated in his *Fruitleſs Precaution*, and the *Complaiſant Companion*, but this could not have been early enough to have been of any uſe, as ſome imagine, to BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, BEAUMONT having died when SCARRON was only five years old.

The Cuſtom of the Country. This tragic comedy, as it is called, has aſſiſted other authors but never did any thing for its own. CIBBER uſed part of it for *Love makes a Man*, and CHARLES JOHNSON formed out of it his *Country Laſſes.* It is a ſtrange wild thing but full of good materials. Its great fault is obſcenity. DRYDEN ſays in one of his prefaces, by way of anſwer to thoſe who accuſed him of indecency. "There is more baudry in one play "of FLETCHER, called the *Cuſtom of the Country*, "than in all ours together; yet this has often been "acted on the ſtage in my remembrance."

CHAP. II.

CONTINUATION OF BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

The Noble Gentleman. This comedy was little known till it was revived by DURFEY, under the title of *The Three Dukes of Dunſtable*, and then it was only ſtirred up to make its ſtench more intolerable. ſir GEORGE ETHERIDGE, in a letter to the duke of BUCKINGHAM, ſays, "By my laſt packet from ENGLAND, among a heap of nauſeous traſh, I received the Three Dukes of Dunſtable, which is really ſo monſtrous and inſipid that I am ſorry LAPLAND, or LIVONIA, had not the honour of producing it; but, if I did pennance in reading it, I rejoice to hear that it was ſolemnly interred to the tune of Cat Calls."

The Captain, a comedy of very ſlender merit, has been ſometimes attempted on the ſtage, but the effort was always ſo unſucceſsful that it has long been lain by as unfit for ſervice.

Beggar's Buſh. What ſucceſs this play had originally is not known. It was altered and brought out under the title of the *Royal Merchant*, by NORRIS, the comedian, in 1706, and in that ſtate occaſionally performed. In 1768 it was made into an opera by Mr. HULL, the muſic by Mr. LINLEY. It had no great ſucceſs, but the words and muſic of ſome of the ſongs were again brought forward and introduced into the *Camp*, an entertainment performed with great ſucceſs in 1778, and attributed to Mr. SHERIDAN; but, that every bird of Parnaſſus may be allowed his own plumage, the ſongs above mentioned, which were conſidered as indifferently written at Covent Garden in the Royal Merchant, were found admirable afterwards at Drury Lane in the Camp, are not the production of Mr. SHERIDAN, but of Mr. HULL.

The Coxcomb. This comedy may rank with The Captain. Its revival has been attempted but to no purpoſe.

The Falſe One. This tragedy is founded on CLEOPATRA's inconſtancy to JULIUS CÆSAR in EGYPT, and taken from SUETONIUS, PLUTARCH, and other authors, who wrote of thoſe times. It has ſome ſtrong writing, but upon the whole it is a bad play.

The Chances. This is a comedy borrowed from The Lady Cornelia of Cervantes, and has been by various authors altered and brought on the theatre. The duke of BUCKINGHAM's alteration was a very judicious one. He kept the hurry and perplexity of the plot much more clear than it had been originally, but after all it has much more to beget curiosity than to create interest, and the indelicacy that pervades the piece, and the libertinism throughout the whole character of DON JOHN, render it a most improper and reprehensible subject for the stage; nor could GARRICK's incomparable performance of this character, though he had again weeded it, scarcely justify our attention to it.

The Loyal Subject. This tragedy is a poor production. It would not be worth while to examine it, and indeed it has lain so long asleep that it were pity to awake it. *The Laws of Candy*, a tragi-comedy by these authors, has been a great while in the same situation, and so let it remain. *The Lover's Progress* has no better pretension to our notice. It is taken from a French romance called *Lysander and Calista*, written by DAUDIGUIER, and to the same peaceful oblivion we may also consign the *Island Princess*.

The Humouous Lieutenant. This play has been

performed at different times with ſome ſucceſs. The principal part of the plot is taken from PLUTARCH's Life of DEMETRIUS, and the Lieutenant's refuſing to fight after he has been cured of his wounds, is the ſtory of LUCULLUS's ſoldier, related by HORACE. This is a play of that ſlighty kind which theſe authors ſo frequently produced, and is neither full enough of intereſt or regularity to claim a permanent ſituation in the theatre.

Nice Valour; or the Paſſionate Madman. This comedy is one of the worſt pieces in the whole catalogue.

The Maid in the Mill. This play has been ſometimes revived, but its ſucceſs has never repaid the pains of thoſe who have brought it forward. The plot of ANTONIO ISMENIA, and AMINTA, is borrowed from GIRARDO, and OTRANTE ſeizing FLORIMEL, the ſuppoſed daughter of the miller, is taken from an Italian novel written by BANDELLO, which was afterwards tranſlated into French. There is much good writing in this piece; but there is ſomething ſo radically wrong in its conſtruction that inſtead of mending it, the author, as the chairman ſaid to POPE, "had better had made two new "ones."

The Propheteſs. This tragical hiſtory, as it is called, is founded on the well known ſtory of DIOCLESIAN, to whom it was foretold by a propheteſs that he ſhould be emperor of ROME when he ſhould have killed a mighty boar; which prediction was fulfilled by his putting to death the tyrant APER. This extraordinary production has been brought on the ſtage in a variety of ſhapes, and in particular in the form of an opera by BETTERTON, in 1690, embelliſhed by PURCELL's muſic; but it has always been found ſo undramatic, and ſo little intereſting, that upon theſe occaſions all the expence has been thrown away.

Bonduca. This queen of ICENE, who was indifferently called by hiſtorians BONDUCA, or BOADICEA, has been frequently the ſubject of a play. This of BEAUMONT and PLETCHER is the earlieſt and upon the whole the beſt; for it is full of pithy, nervous writing and good intereſt, the misfortunes of that ill fated princeſs being remarkably touching and well calculated for the ſtage. It, however, has never done any thing material, even when it has been judiciouſly altered. Mr. COLMAN, with great judgement and a proper tenderneſs for the reputation of theſe authors, brought it out on his theatre in the Haymarket, in 1778; but it has been ſeldom re-

ſumed, and it is now lain by with but little proſpect of being brought forward again.

The Sea Voyage. The deſign of this comedy is borrowed from SHAKESPEAR's Tempeſt, and has in it ſome good things, not good enough, however, to cope with the original; and, as if the failure was not diſgraceful enough to the authors, DURFEY revived it with alterations which made it ten times worſe.

The Double Marriage is a very indifferent play. It has been frequently revived, but, though DURFEY lent a hand to ſpoil it, nothing reſulted from the attempt but diſappointment.

The Pilgrim. This excentric comedy has a great deal of merit. It originally received great applauſe, and has been often ſucceſsfully revived. In 1700, ſir JOHN VANBRUGH brought it out at Drury Lane Theatre, with a Prologue and DRYDEN's Secular Maſque, which was the laſt of that great poet's works; but which, for what it is, abounds with brilliant poetry. It was revived again at Drury Lane without ſucceſs; but about the year 1762, it was brought out at Covent Garden with conſiderable reputation. Since that time it has been very ſeldom repeated.

The Woman's Prize; or, the Tamer tamed. This play, which is ſaid to have been written by FLETCHER alone, after the death of BEAUMONT, ſo that the reader will ſee how weak all the authorities are upon this ſubject, is intended as a ſequel to SHAKESPEAR's Taming of the Shrew. CATHERINE being dead, PETRUCHIO is married to a young woman of a mild and gentle diſpoſition, who, in conjunction with ſome female companions, determine to break the temper of her huſband, which is at length effected; in conſequence of which he blindly ſubmits himſelf to her will and ſhe rules him as ſhe thinks proper.

Nothing is ſo eaſy as to ſee that a play cannot be framed upon worſe principles. The conduct of PETRUCHIO though violent is laudable, becauſe reaſonable ſubmiſſion is not only the duty but enſures the comfort of a wife, and, therefore, a proper ſubject for a poet to treat. Blind ſubmiſſion in a huſband, which muſt render him ridiculous to his friends, and an object of contempt even to his wife, is upon the ſame principle very improper matter for the ſtage; beſides the author of this play has wholly miſtaken the character of PETRUCHIO. So far from being of a tyrannical temper, he is generous and noble; his violence is all put on, all aſſumed;

and, from the moment he has carried his point and reſtored CATHERINE to herſelf, to him, and to her family, he "doffs the lordly huſband." Time, however, who, as SHAKESPEAR ſays, "tries all old "offenders," has ſettled the diſpute, for, while the Tamer tamed lies quietly interred with many of the family, CATHERINE and PETRUCHIO lives to afford us inſtruction and amuſement.

An Honeſt Man's Fortune, part of which is taken from HEYWOOD's hiſtory of Women, Love's Cure, and The Knight of Malta, are pieces which help to fill up the catalogue of theſe authors, but, though there is ſome good writing in each of them, they have very little claim to dramatic merit. To theſe may be added the *Queen of Corinth* which ſtands in the ſame predicament.

Women Pleaſed. The ſubject of this play has employed the pens of many authors, three of the different novels of BOCCACE having ſomething to do with it; but the ground work is in CHAUCER's Wife of Bath's Tale, which VOLTAIRE has ſucceſsfully treated under the title of *Ce qui plait aux Dames.* This was afterwards brought on the French ſtage by FAVART, and called *La Fee Urgelle*, and and at length taken by GARRICK for the ſubject of

ſubject of his *Chriſtmas Tale.* This is certainly a piece of merit; but as the ſubject has been frequently tried and never to any effect without the auxiliary aſſiſtance of ſcenery and muſic, and, indeed, romantic and fanciful tales are not at all calculated for comedy which ſhould depict true, fair, and natural manners, *Women Pleaſed*, in the ſtate it came out of the hands of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, has never been fortunate enough to pleaſe an audience.

A Wife for a Month. This tragi-comedy, a deſcription which always implies ſomething hetrogeneous, has ſome good traits. It is partly borrowed from the hiſtory of SANCHO the eighth, of LEON. The misfortune of this ſort of production is that the two plots are ſo diſtinct they cannot lend one another intereſt; and, take them ſingly, they have not ſtrength enough to ſupport themſelves, therefore let them be written ever ſo well they cannot have the effect of a play upon a ſubject in which if any thing is introduced it is kept ſubordinate, and ſo conſtructed as to aſſiſt the general deſign. Unfortunately this does not happen to be the merit of this play, nor, indeed, ſcarcely any tragi-comedy written by theſe authors.

The Fair Maid of the Inn is a tragi-comedy, and ſtands in ſomething like the ſame predicament as *A Wife for a Month.*

Wit at ſeveral Weapons, in which there is ſome whim, did very little itſelf, but has ſerved as materials for other plays, particularly for ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT, who borrowed a good deal of it for his play called *The Wits.*

Valentinian. This is a tragedy, a ſpecies of performance in which BEAUMONT and FLETCHER have been leaſt ſucceſsful; this tragedy, however, is ſaid to have been well received when it firſt came out. It has been revived, and, in particular, by lord ROCHESTER, but it never met with ſufficient applauſe to warrant a repetition of it.

Love's Pilgrimage. This comedy, partly borrowed from *The two Damſels of Cervantes*, and partly from *The New Inn*, a play of JONSON, which was damned, has ſome merit. With all this aſſiſtance, however, though it has often been brought forward, the revivers only awaked it that it might ſleep the faſter.

Four Plays in One. Theſe four pieces, the two

firſt of which may be called tragi-comedies, the third a tragedy, and the fourth an opera, are principally taken from BOCCACE, and are ſuppoſed to be performed before MANUEL, king of PORTUGAL, and his queen ISABELLA, at the celebration of their nuptials, the court being introduced as ſpectators, and the king and queen making remarks on the repreſentation. It is, however, moſt probable that this curious medley was never performed at all.

The Wild Gooſe Chaſe. This play has conſiderable merit, but it is like the reſt ill conducted. The materials, however, have been found very uſeful; FARQUHAR has borrowed almoſt four acts of *The Inconſtant* from it.

Theſe plays, *The Widow*, *The Jeweller of Amſterdam*, *The Faithful Friend*, *A Right Woman*, and *The Hiſtory of Mador, King of Britain* are all ſaid to have been written by theſe wits, either ſingly, together, or in conjunction with others, but how they were actually employed on them remains a ſecret which will be, probably, never divulged, nor is it very material whether it be or not.

I ſhall yet employ, however, a few words upon the ſubject of theſe authors, whoſe labours, though they may have failed as to regularity, and have

been weak on the ſide of judgment, are, notwithſtanding, meritorious, and breathe in various inſtances ſpirit and genius. The miſtake ſeems to have been an endeavour to ſoar beyond what nature qualified them for. The genius of SHAKESPEAR, being extenſive enough to graſp at real and imaginary worlds, they vainly conceived they might endeavour at the ſame track; but, in their fond neſs, they were Ixions, and in their preſumption Phaetons.

BEAUMONT is ſaid to have poſſeſſed the correcteſt judgment of the two, and FLETCHER the ſtrongeſt genius, and we are even told, that JONSON uſed to ſubmit his works to the opinion and correction of BEAUMONT; this, however, after what we have witneſſed of CHAPMAN, DECKER, and others whom this hard cynic envied and abuſed, it is extremely difficult to believe; for, if BEAUMONT had ſuch conſummate judgment he certainly would have uſed it in the conſtruction of his own plays, the plots of which are the crudeſt and moſt indigeſted that can be poſſibly be conceived; and, as to the judgment of JONSON, it is but juſtice to ſay that it was his greateſt merit, and that there is more good ſenſe in the conſtruction of *Every Man in his Humour* than in that of all the works of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER put together.

All that is neceſſary to ſay on the ſubject may be comprized in this. The induſtry with which BEAUMONT and FLETCHER explored the works of the Spaniards and others for dramatic materials has been of ſuch benefit to the Engliſh ſtage, that it not only lent material aſſiſtance towards bringing it into great forwardneſs, but ſerved as a ground work for others, who have ſince derived much of their ſucceſs from having had recourſe to their labours.

As to their particular merits they were both good writers, and would have been better had they not perpetually tried to go beyond the bounds that nature and genius preſcribed them, had they not written too haſtily, had they not given into an unbridled wit which grew to licentiouſneſs and deſtroyed the legitimate drift of their productions, had they not, in ſhort, arrogated a falſe conſequence and ridiculouſly fancied themſelves ſuperior to a man, whom they might have been proud to have followed at an humble diſtance.

As to the ſhare they had reſpectively in thoſe productions which are publiſhed with their joint names, I have already ſhewn that whatever has been conjectured on the ſubject ſeems to have a very falacious air. That BEAUMONT could have been concerned in fifty-three plays in eight years appears

to be impoſſible. It is as certainly impoſſible that ſo large a number could have been brought out during that time, and it is very unlikely that BEAUMONT left behind him, he who was a writer for the moment, materials for the greateſt part of theſe plays; but, as we have no proof that what has been aſſerted on this ſubject is falſe, though it is a little contradictory, we are compelled ſo far to acquieſce as to give our verdict according to the evidence.

One proud fact, however, the labours of theſe writers and their cotemporaries have aſcertained. All this contention for pre-eminence that was manifeſted, all theſe valuable dramatic materials that were produced, and all this rapid improvement to which the ſtage had ariſen, had been confirmed before the French theatre, that has always arrogantly affected to lead ours, boaſted a ſingle line from the great CORNEILLE, or any one of his ſatelites and before MOLIERE and RACINE were born. Who then can deny that, having ſo perfect a model before them as the Engliſh ſtage, they made it an object of their imitation? But that there may be no cavil this ſhall hereafter be inconteſtibly proved.

CHAP. III.

MASSINGER.

If, in Beaumont and Fletcher, we lament that authors ſometimes attempt too much, in Massinger, we have a proof that they may do too little. This very charming writer has ſeldom been allowed the merit he poſſeſſed, perhaps, becauſe he was a ſtranger to preſumption, vanity, and thoſe other qualities which often procure for an author more fame than he deſerves; poſterity, however, generally ſets the matter right; which, in the opinions of all judges of genius and taſte, has placed Massinger very little behind Jonson, and far before Beaumont and Fletcher.

Massinger, by the patronage of the earl of Montgomery, under whom his father had an honourable employ, and afterwards the earl of Pembroke, was encouraged in his youth to purſue polite literature; which, coming in conſonance with a beautiful and refined genius which he inherited from

nature, he ſoon poſſeſſed all the qualities for a writer of correct taſte and brilliant fancy.

The ſtage attracted his attention, and was, indeed, the very field for the exerciſe of his abilities. He had invention and ingenuity, he knew nature and character; his ſtyle, while it was warm and fervid, was, nevertheleſs, pure and decorous, and even went beyond the times in which he wrote for poliſh and refinement; for he was as ſtrong as JONSON without being dull, and as elegant as WALLER without being mawkiſh; but, to give the proudeſt proof of the genius of MASSINGER, you ſee a great deal of the mind of SHAKESPEAR in him, though he has never ſervilely imitated him, nor arrogantly attempted to ſoar after him to thoſe heights which his genius alone could reach. But let us examine his plays.

The Virgin Martyr. This play was firſt acted, as we are told, in 1622, at which time MASSINGER was thirty-eight years old. He was aſſiſted by DECKER in this production, which, perhaps, might better have been let alone, but his modeſty too often prevented him from feeling his own conſequence. *The Virgin Martyr* is taken from the *Martylogies of the perſecution in the time of* DIOCLESIAN; and, though there is ſome fine writing in it, it is evi-

dently a work of inexperience, and, therefore, had no great ſucceſs.

The Duke of Milan. Here our author had fairer play for his genius. This tragedy was performed in 1623 with good ſucceſs. The ſcene where inſtructions are given by SFORZA to his favourite FRANCISCO for the murder of MARCELIA, is wrought up very maſterly, and I have no doubt but this very play has aſſiſted the various *Mariamnes* of the French ſtage, from TRISTAN to VOLTAIRE, that ſtory from the Hiſtory of the Jews having been the foundation of *The Duke of Milan.* Indeed the circumſtances are ſo ſimilar that Mr. CUMBERBERLAND very laudably was induced to blend this play and FENTON's *Mariamne* together; but probably from his unwillingneſs to encroach upon the writing of either of theſe authors, it appeared not to be of a piece, and, therefore, did not ſucceed.

The Bondman, acted at the Cock Pit, Drury Lane, 1623. This is a tragedy of great merit. The plot is full of truth and conſiſtency, and the writing is ſtrong and nervous. The incident of bringing back the rebellious ſlaves to their duty with whips, is in the trueſt ſpirit of the drama, and is here uſed to great advantage. *The Bondman* has been fre-

quently revived, and particularly by Mr. CUMBERLAND in 1779, at Covent Garden theatre. This was certainly a very judicious alteration, and it was highly ſpoken of by the critics, but it did not ſucceed to the degree that was reaſonably expected.

The Roman Actor was performed at Black Friars in 1629. It was MASSINGER's greateſt favourite among all his works, and the writers of that time were ſo far of the ſame opinion that no leſs than ſix copies of commendatory verſes were prefixed to it. Indeed its ſucceſs was very decided, both originally and when it was revived by BETTERTON, who rendered himſelf very celebrated in the principal character. There is certainly a dignity in the conduct of the piece, and the language is charming.

The Renegado. This is a tragi-comedy and was performed in 1630, at Drury Lane. This play was recommended by complimentary verſes like the former, and certainly has much merit, but it has the fault of all tragi-comedies. The plots hang incongruouſly together, and, therefore, each deprives the other of the approbation that would elſe be due to them.

The Picture, performed in 1630, at the Globe, and Black Friars. This admirable production,

which is called a tragi-comedy, ought to be denominated a play, for it conſiſts of a plot and an epiſode that have immediate relation to each other. There are objections to this piece, one of which cannot be got over, becauſe it is particularly wrong to call in magic to aſſiſt what ought to be a repreſentation of nature. BATISTA's reading, therefore, in nature's hidden ſecrets, and having thereby formed a portrait of SOPHIA which appears to the eyes of MATHIAS beautiful or deformed, according as ſhe is loyal or diſloyal, is certainly revolting, and inadmiſſible; but it has this admirable effect; The poet by placing his characters in ſo forcible a ſituation, is obliged to give them a language adequate to it, and thus the paſſion of jealouſy acquires a peculiar kind of turbulence and agitation which, from mere conjectural proofs, could not have belonged to it.

Of this difficult and delicate taſk, MASSINGER has acquitted himſelf wonderfully; ſo that, if you can bring yourſelf to pardon the deception, it will encreaſe your admiration of the author. Novelty was, probably, his excuſe, and he has ſo availed himſelf of it, that, perhaps, there cannot in language be found any thing ſtronger than the effect it has produced.

It is impoſſible here to go into the different merits of this piece; but whether you take it for conduct, for character, or any other requiſite, but eſpecially for language, a few ſpots excepted, it is certainly a conſtellation in literature.

The Emperor of the Eaſt was performed in 1632. This is a tragi-comedy, and taken from the Life of the younger THEODOCIUS. We ſhould have known more at preſent, perhaps, of this piece in its original form had not LEE, that mad, but beautiful writer, taken ſome of the moſt forcible parts of it for his tragedy of *Theodocius*.

The Maid of Honour, performed in 1638, is a work of conſiderable merit. It has been revived, and particularly within a few years at Drury Lane theatre; but productions by men of ſuch eminence as MASSINGER ſhould never be touched but by authors of firſt rate abilities. In its original ſtate *The Maid of Honour* could not now be produced to advantage, but it had better have remained in its original ſtate than have appeared as it did at Drury Lane theatre.

The Fatal Dowry, which was brought out in 1632, is a tragedy, and would probably, have poſ-

ſeſſed more merit if MASSINGER had not been aſſiſted by FIELD. It has, however, enough to have materially aſſiſted both ROWE and VOLTAIRE; for it has furniſhed the moſt material parts of the *Fair Penitent*, and the character of NERESTAN in *Zara*. I ſhall ſay the leſs of this play becauſe I like MASSINGER beſt when he ſtands upon his own ground.

A New Way to Pay Old Debts, is a comedy full of admirable materials. It came out in 1633, and was prefaced by two copies of commendatory verſes, one by ſir HENRY MOODY, and the other by ſir THOMAS JAY. This play has been conſidered by moſt of the critics as the beſt in all the works of MASSINGER. It is difficult to ſay this; but it is certainly drawn with great nature and force, and written with ſtrength and nerve. The overreaching of ſir GILES OVERREACH, "both a lion "and a fox in his proceedings," is maſterly, and the diſmiſſal of his creature MARRALL, is moral and poetic. There are many other parts of this play full of ſterling merit. It has been ſeveral times revived, particularly at Drury Lane, and ſince at Covent Garden, to aſſiſt HENDERSON, who performed ſir GILES OVERREACH with judgment; but injudicious pruning always wounds a good tree,

and this kind of ſtab did the reputation of MASSINGER ſuſtain in both this caſe and in other caſes.

The Great Duke of Florence. This piece, like *The Guardian*, is called a comical hiſtory. It had great ſucceſs, and is recommended by verſes written by DONNE and FORD. The ſtory of EDGAR and ELFRIDA, is ſaid to have been taken from this play; and certainly the circumſtance of SANNASARRO's giving the Count a falſe account of LYDIA's beauty, has a reſemblance to that part of it; but that ſtory was known before MASSINGER, therefore, RYMER, who took his materials from *William of Malmeſbury*, RAVENSCROFT who profitted of both, and HILL, whoſe *Athelwold*, and alſo MASON's *Elfrida*, were taken from hiſtory, could not have had the leaſt neceſſity to reſort to the *Duke of Florence* for aſſiſtance.

The Unnatural Combat, performed in 1639, is a tragedy of very great merit. This merit, however, lies more in the aſtoniſhing manner in which the author has treated this ſtrange ſubject, than in the conduct of the piece itſelf. To fancy revolting circumſtances, which it is dreadful to admit may be natural, and operate upon them as if they were generally ſo, is begging the queſtion, and cannot be excuſed, however forcibly it may ſpeak the merit of the

author who can write well upon ſuch extraordinary occaſions.

The mutual accuſations of the father and ſon, which are the cauſe of the combat, the artful manner in which the Elder MALEFORT impoſes upon the Count by acting the BRUTUS, and the delicate, yet determined tone of the Younger, who accuſes his father of an inceſtuous crime which he ſcarcely dares to hint, is executed with ſuch ſound judgment, ſuch ſhrewd art, and ſuch conſummate addreſs, that I cannot think there is any thing in language to rival it; but, though theſe have been conſidered, from ÆSCHYLUS to us, as the proper ſubjects to excite terror, and ſo they are in one ſenſe, I never will allow they are the legitimate, fair objects of the drama.

At any rate let there be qualification. The inceſt of HAMLET's father, cauſed by ambition, is an admiſſible ſubject for an author, the inceſt of MALEFORT's father, without a motive but barely wickedneſs, is not admiſſible; and, under theſe circumſtances much as the writing of *The Unnatural Combat* may captivate, I believe no real well wiſher to the intereſt of the drama will wiſh to ſee it brought forward on the ſtage.

The Guardian, performed in 1655, is a comedy of very great merit; and, two or three trifling particulars excepted, I ſee nothing to prevent its holding a regular rank on the ſtage. It is full of well managed equivoque, which is judiciouſly heightened at the end of the third act, and naturally developed at the finiſh of the play. The writing is of that fluent and eaſy kind that, nevertheleſs, has ſtrength and force, and that gives to manlineſs, and greatneſs of mind, the unaffected expreſſion of nature; but this is the peculiar beauty of MASSINGER; who, let his ſubjects be ever ſo common, never deſcends.

The Baſhful Lover, a tragi-comedy, which was produced at the Private Theatre, at Black Friars, in 1655, deſerves mention only on account of many beauties that are ſcattered up and down in different parts of it; for it is not conſtructed with the uſual correctneſs of MASSINGER, nor is the drift of the plots ſo intereſting as any of his other pieces.

The Very Woman, is another tragi-comedy. It was performed alſo in 1655, and has merit; but neither that nor ſir ASTON COCKAINE's *Obſtinate Lady*, from which it is borrowed, has a good claim to any material reputation. The more you read MASSINGER the more you admire him, and, there-

fore, even in this play, we trace a true genius and an elegant writer; but it is, nevertheleſs, unequal to many of his other productions.

The Old Law, a comedy brought out in 1656, is by no means a good play, though parts of it are admirable. MASSINGER was here aſſiſted by MIDDLETON and ROWLEY. Perhaps it would have better if he had been let alone; certainly neither of theſe writers was by any means equal to MASSINGER.

The City Madam, produced in 1659. This comedy, which has a moſt laudable drift, is worked up with great art and addreſs. The folly of the children of induſtry and ſobriety, who ſpurn at that happineſs they legitimately poſſeſs, and that ſtable conſequence by which they are the ſupport of the commercial intereſt of the kingdom, and, therefore, the baſis of its wealth, for the tranſitory and frivolous pleaſures of the court, has been properly conſidered by the dramatiſt as the beſt materials for the exerciſe of his genius.

MASSINGER here has handled this ſubject in a maſterly ſtyle. His portraits are faithful to nature,

his manners are correctly appropriate, and his discrimination is nice and critical.

Haughty, puffed up beauty, full of vanity and ambition, is as natural as it is contemptible; grovling ideas and riches wrefted from the unfufpecting and neceffitous, are infeperable, and a diftinction between folly and crime, weaknefs and wickednefs, is, in thefe circumftances, the duty of an author. Thus has MASSINGER made his *City Madam* and her daughters arrogant and overbearing to be feverely punifhed and afterwards pardoned, and thus he has made that foftered fnake the dependant brother the inftrument of temporary punifhment to others whofe crimes were within the limits of pardon; till, at laft, his arts recoil upon himfelf, and he is confounded in that ruin he had meditated for others.

This is the grand outline of the play, and very fine it is; there are fubordinate particulars, however, which might have been better managed, fir JOHN, LACY, and PLENTY might have been more judicioufly difguifed and have come with a more probable tale, confidering the confummate art of the man they had to deal with, and the magic at laft, after the difrepute poor STARGAZE had thrown it into, is a poor contrivance to awe a libertine, and an

unbeliever; and, even if it had been in other reſpects admiſſible, it is a blameable vehicle for a dramatic plot, but particularly for a comedy. We paſs over a ghoſt in a tragedy, we are even charmed with a ſpectre in a romance, and we have no objection to changing of the wives in the *Devil to Pay*, becauſe it is a farce, though none of theſe are critically right, but producing ORPHEUS, CERBERUS, CHARON, and twenty other fantaſtic ſpirits in a ſober citizen's houſe would not have impoſed upon LUKE, nor ought it to have impoſed upon the audience.

The faults, however, in this comedy after all are but trivial, and were they judiciouſly removed, and the denouement brought about by a more natural means, there are few pieces on the ſtage that could challenge a fairer claim to reputation.

Beſides the play already mentioned, there were others, written by MASSINGER, of which we have different accounts. Of theſe *The Noble Choice*, *The Judge, or Believe as you Liſt*, *The Spaniſh Viceroy*, *Minerva's Sacrifice*, *The Tyrant*, *Philenzo and Hippolita*, *Antonio and Vallia*, and *Faſt and Welcome*, were loſt to the world by the careleſſneſs of a ſervant belonging to Mr. WARBURTON, the SOMERSETSHIRE Herald.

Three others under the titles of *The Wandering Lovers*, *The Italian Night Piece*, and *The Priſoner*, were performed but never printed. Theſe, therefore, that have been here enumerated with a ſlight account of their different merits, may be conſidered as the theatre of MASSINGER; and here it is impoſſible to help noticing that I cannot in my conſcience agree to the dates of theſe plays which I have ſet down, by the concurrent authorities of various writers, exactly as I found them.

To ſet up any criterion of my own, founded only on probable circumſtances, as to the dates, would be to combat errors, which, to a monſtrous number, are conſidered as dramatic goſpel. Common ſenſe will not permit us to credit the date of any play between 1635 and the Reſtoration; for PRYNN and Puritaniſm ſo attacked the ſtage, that, though it lifted its head for a ſhort time, its own ruin was involved at length in the ruin of the conſtitution *.

* This PRYNN who was a barriſter of Lincoln's Inn, and an enthuſiaſtic puritan, publiſhed in 1633, a work which he called *Hiſtrio Maſtix, or Player's Scourge*. This was a moſt abſurd, illiberal, and wanton abuſe of plays, players and all who favoured them. It was anſwered judiciouſly enough by a publication of as many old plays as could be found, the drift of which did not appear to be of that immoral tendency that PRYNN had repreſented;

It is on this account that, although, in this book I have limited myſelf to the death of JAMES the firſt, I have, nevertheleſs, gone through the whole life of MASSINGER, and I ſhall do the ſame by JONSON, becauſe it keeps the whole ſubject under the reader's eye and within the ſcope of recollection; beſides it is within poſſibility that in doing this I have committed no error, for in the accounts of MASSINGER's death ſcarcely two of them are alike;

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other circumſtances concurred alſo to render this bigot unpopular. He ſays in his book that "Princes dancing in their own perſons was "the cauſe of their untimely ends. That our Engliſh ladies, ſhorn "and frizzled madams, had loſt their modeſty, that plays were the "chief delight of the Devil, and all that frequented them were "damned." This was conſidered as a reflection on the king and queen, who publicly frequented plays. He vents his antipathy to muſic in terms as unqualified, and, in particular, he calls church muſic "The bleating of brute beaſts," and ſays, "the choriſters bellow "the tenor, as if they were oxen, bark a counterpoint like a kennel "of hounds, roar a treble as if they were a bulls, and grunt out a "baſe like a parcel of hogs." The firſt of theſe paſſages reflecting upon the king and nobles, and the other on the church, it was deemed an infamous libel on every branch of the ſtate, and ordered to be burnt by the hands of the common hangman: and, in addition to this, his own ſentence was to be put from the bar, to be excluded the Society of Lincoln's Inn, and degraded by the Univerſity of OXFORD; to ſtand in the pillory in Weſtminſter and Cheapſide, to loſe an ear at each place, and ſtand with a paper in his hand, declaring his offence to be a libel againſt both their majeſties and the government, to be fined five thouſand pounds, and to ſuffer perpetual impriſonment; the whole of which ſentence was put into execution to the letter.

nay, ſome make him live twenty years longer than others do, and ſome ſay he died in affluence, while others inſiſt that he died in penury.

But, to leave that which in this author is uncertain, to dwell a little on what is not, in his various merits he ſtill lives, and will long continue to do ſo, to the honour of genius, of taſte, of elegance, of judgment, of truth, of nature, and of morality.

CHAP. IV.

CHAPMAN, HEYWOOD, DECKER, MARSTON, AND OTHERS.

I SHALL now go into all that it will be neceſſary to ſay on the ſubject of CHAPMAN and other writers, who, though they were conſidered as a ſubordinate claſs, were, nevertheleſs, men of abilities; and, having done this, and alſo noticed what more I may conceive myſelf bound to ſay of JONSON, I ſhall purſue the willing taſk of dwelling a little more on the plays of SHAKESPEAR.

Before JAMES the firſt, CHAPMAN produced two plays. In 1605 he brought out a comedy called *All Fools*, which was taken from TERENCE, and which received conſiderable applauſe. *Eaſtward Hoe*, performed in the ſame year, is more celebrated for the predicament into which it plunged its ſuppoſed authors, CHAPMAN, JONSON, and MARSTON, as the reader will recollect, than for any merit the piece itſelf contained. HOGARTH,

however, took from it the plan of his *Idle and Induſtrious Apprentices*, and it was revived many years ſince as a proper ſubſtitute on Lord Mayor's Day, for that diſgrace to the ſtage, *The London Cuckolds*, TATE again brought it forward and called it *The Cuckold's Haven*, and Mrs. LENOX alſo brought it out with alterations under the title of *Old City Manners*.

The Gentleman Uſher, a comedy produced in 1606, had its partiſans, but it is indifferently ſpoken of, and there is a doubt whether it was ever acted, *Monſieur D'Olive*, performed in the ſame year, received ſome praiſe, and we are told was performed with ſucceſs.

Buſſy D'Ambois made its appearance in 1607. It was the firſt tragedy produced by CHAPMAN, and thought by ſome to be the beſt of his works. It kept the ſtage for a time with conſiderable reputation, but at length, that eternal mutilater of good authors, DURFEY laid his iron hand on it, from which time it became ſo crampt that it has ever ſince been laid aſide.

Cæſar and Pompey was performed in the ſame year with ſome ſucceſs. The *Conſpiracy*, and *Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron, Marſhal of France*,

came out in 1608, and consists of two plays which relate to the history of FRANCE in the time of HENRY the fourth.

May Day, a comedy, was brought out at Black Friars in 1613. There is nothing material known of this piece, but *The Widow's Tears*, produced in 1612, is well spoken of. The subject is evidently *The Ephesian Matron*, but in the other parts there are some well wrought scenes, and several affecting and interesting incidents. CHAPMAN is every where a man of learning, but he has in this play shewn himself a writer of taste and genius.

The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, is a bad attempt at following up a good subject, for it is not so close to history as the former play, nor does it create so much interest. The *Masque of the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn*. This was no more than a temporary piece to celebrate the marriage of the Count PALATINE, of the RHINE, with the Princess ELIZABETH. It was performed before the Royal Family at Whitehall, and cost the societies of these courts two thousand four hundred pounds. The machinery and decorations were designed and conducted by INIGO JONES.

Two Wife Men and all the reſt Fools. It is doubtful whether this curious piece was written by CHAPMAN; but, as it has never been aſcribed to any other author, we always find it in his catalogue. It was performed, or, perhaps, only printed, in 1619, and is remarkable for having a prologue and epilogue in proſe, and for its being extended to ſeven acts; but as theſe are inovations of no kind of conſequence, the intelligent reader would have been better ſatisfied if an account had been preſerved of its merits as to character, incident, and ſituation.

Revenge for Honour, The *Fatal Love*, The *Tragedy of a Yorkſhire Gentlewoman and her Son*, and The *Second Maiden's Tragedy*, are alſo from the pen of CHAPMAN, but they do not appear to have been printed, and, therefore, it is impoſſible to ſay any thing of their merits with certainty. What we do know of this author, who was, as is univerſally admitted, a man of ſound erudition, in the character of a dramatiſt is at leaſt honourable to his fame, which cannot, perhaps, receive a ſtronger proof than his being conſidered a reſpectable cotemporary writer with SHAKESPEAR, and an object of envy to JONSON.

HEYWOOD's dramatic works, after the death of

ELIZABETH, next claim our attention. *If you Know not me you Know Nobody*, was performed in 1606. This production conſiſts of two parts, and relates to circumſtances which happened during the reign of ELIZABETH, but how the building of the Royal Exchange can be dramatized is really more than one can ordinarily conceive. Upon the whole it was a ſtrange incomprehenſible thing, which the author allows, but he ſhields himſelf from cenſure by a declaration that it was printed without his conſent, and to prove that this copy, which is full of irregularity, and not even divided into acts, might be modified and amended, he produced what he conceived a perfect piece on the ſame ſubject, which, however, met as bad a fate as the original.

The Fair Maid of the Exchange. of which mention is only made of the title, *The Golden Age*, and *The Silver Age*, two pieces crammed full of circumſtances from the Heathen Mythology without order, or coherence, as is alſo his next piece called The *Brazen Age*, and *The Four Apprentices of London*, with the *Conqueſt of Jeruſalem*, which is taken from the exploits of GODFREY of BOLLOGNE, a moſt romantic ſubject for a play, are alſo among HEYWOOD's dramatic productions.

After this we met with *A Woman killed with*

Kindneſs, a piece, though upon a moſt extravagant and overſtrained ſubject, certainly written in a ſtrong and maſterly ſtyle. The incidents are perplexed, owing to their number, but the relation they bear to one another is perfectly dramatic, except the quarrel of MONTFORD and ACTON, which had better have been out of the piece. There is ſomething revolting in the conduct of Mrs. FRANKFORD, but her contrition, and the conſciouſneſs of her not deſerving that lenity which her forgiving huſband, in conſequence of her repentence, humanely ſhews her, and which produces the remorſe that is the cauſe of her death, exhibits a moſt forcible moral. It ſeems to reprobate by anticipation the dangerous doctrines of lord CHESTERFIELD, and is, in fact, whether deſignedly or not, the ground work of Mr. PRATT's admirable production The *Pupil of Pleaſure*. Theſe are the worthieſt purpoſes to which the ſtage can be applied, and if this play were well modernized, and well acted, it could not fail of brilliant ſucceſs *.

* As I conceive it a duty to lift the Engliſh ſtage, wherever I properly may, into conſequence, I ſhall never omit any material proof that it has been of ſervice to foreigners. I have no doubt but DODSLEY's twelve volumes of Old Plays have created half the reputation of the German theatre. It is a pity, however, that the German authors conſtantly pervert the morality of theſe plays; for, upon the footing that their ſtage is now conſtructed, their characters

The Rape of Lucrene. This true Roman tragedy as it is called, and indeed very properly, for it is a complete farago of declaiming, miming, and

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are any thing but natural and moral; which may be proved in many inftances. I fhall only, however, adduce one proof, which I do upon fair and liberal ground, conceiving it a pofitive duty I owe the public to warn them againft the introduction of falfe tafte. The proof I mean is the *Stranger*, a play recently performed at Drury Lane, which is evidently taken from *A Woman killed with Kindnefs*, with this difference, that in the firft the hufband receives an adultrefs to his bed, a thing which an audience ought not to tolerate, and in the other, however the imbecility of nature may plead for the guilty wife, the hufband true to his own honour, nay, to her honour, to the honour of his children, for there are children in both plays, folemnly allots her a fituation worthy of his wife, where fhe may repent at leifure, but refolves to have no further intercourfe with her, all which fhe beautifully calls "a mild fentence." There, fince nothing but death can obliterate her crime, her remorfe and his complicated kindnefs put an end to her exiftence; and why has the poet done this? That the wife may be forgiven and pitied, that the hufband's honour may be reftored, and that the children taught by fo folemn an example, may walk in the paths of virtue. This is moral, and poetic; but would any of thefe ends be attained were the hufband, forgetful of himfelf, and of focial and moral duty, to pardon her frailty, to confecrate adultery, and to imprint on the young minds of his children that happinefs is to be earned by infamy?. Thefe are facts, and I fhall make no further comment on them than to fay, that fuch perverted exhibitions are traps for virtue, and that the better they are written the more they will prove feductive.

I cannot refift tranfcribing a fhort fcene, to fhew how exquifitely natural, yet difficult, the conduct of the hnfband is.

After fhe has faid, fearing her hufband's juft anger, that fhe deferves a thoufand deaths, but entreats that, for the fake of her fex,

ſinging, is very ill calculated for the Engliſh ſtage, and, therefore, it was poorly received. This is, however, by no means a general rule, and more's the pity.

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to which ſhe was once an ornament, but then a reproach, he would not deform her, nor wound her but let her body go perfect to her grave, he anſwers:

FRAN. My God, with patience arm me! riſe, nay riſe,
And I'll debate with thee. Was it for want
Thou plaid'ſt the ſtrumpet? Was't thou not ſupply'd
With every pleaſure, faſhion and new toy;
Nay even beyond my calling?
ANNE. I was.
FRAN. Was it then diſability in me?
ANNE. O no.
FRAN. Did not I lodge thee in my boſom?
Wear thee in my heart?
ANNE. You did.
FRAN. I did indeed, witneſs my tears I did.
Go bring my infants hither. O Nan, O Nan;
If neither fear nor ſhame, regard of honour,
The blemiſh of my houſe, nor my dear love
Could have withheld thee from ſo lewd a fact:
Yet for theſe infants, theſe young harmleſs ſouls,
On whoſe white brows thy ſhame is character'd,
And grows in greatneſs as they wax in years;
Look but on them, and melt away in tears,
Away with them; leſt as her ſpotted body
Hath ſtain'd their names with ſtripe of baſtardy,
So her adulterous breath may blaſt their ſpirits
With her infectious thoughts. Away with them.

Thus we ſee that, almoſt two hundred years ago, the Engliſh ſtage was in a ſtate of greater perfection than the German ſtage is at this moment.

The Fair Maid of the Weſt, a comedy in two parts, had conſiderable ſucceſs. Its ſubject may be found in DANCER, who wrought theſe two pieces into a novel called The *Engliſh Lovers*.

The Iron Age. Theſe fanciful kind of pieces are very ill calculated for the ſtage but, now and then incongruities pleaſe beſt. The *Iron Age* was produced in two parts, the firſt of which contains no leſs than the Rape of HELEN, the Siege of TROY, the Combat between HECTOR and AJAX, the Deaths of TROILUS and HECTOR, the Death of ACHILLES, the Contention of AJAX and ULYSSES, the Death of AJAX, and many other circumſtances.

The ſecond part goes on and deſcribes the deaths of AGAMENNON, MENELAUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, HELEN, ORESTES, EGISTHUS, PYLADES, and in ſhort all the reſt of the perſonages, at any time, or in any way concerned in the Trojan war, to THERSITES; ſo that we have HOMER, and all the other of the claſſical writers on this curious ſubject, crammed into two plays, or rather narratives in dialogue; which are brought forward without the leaſt regard to any ſpecies of dramatic propriety. This curious medley, however, as well as the *Three Ages* before ſpoken of brought crouded audiences, which in

general conſoles an author for any drawback on reputation.

The Engliſh Traveller, a tragi-comedy, is partly taken from PLAUTUS, and partly from an actual fact. It travelled, however, a very little way either towards dramatic fame, or public favour. *A Maidenhead well Loſt*, loſt itſelf, for there is no trace to be found of it.

The Lancashire Witches, in which BROME aſſiſted, and which was afterwards altered into a more regular piece by SHADWELL, neither in its original or its altered ſtate, did much. Party ſpirit conjured up for it, of courſe, adherents and enemies, and the Papiſts were horridly provoked againſt TEAGUE O'DIVELLY, whoſe tricks and ingenuity, probably, they envied.

Love's Miſtreſs. This is a maſque which was performed before the Royal Family ſeveral times. It is taken from APULIUS's *Golden Aſs*, and is indebted to the decorations of INIGO JONES for the greateſt part of its ſucceſs. This play, the *Challenge for Beauty*, the *Royal King and Loyal Subject*, taken from FLETCHER's *Loyal Subject*, the *Wife Woman of Hogſdon*, which was printed with a copy of com-

mendatory verſes before it, and *Fortune by Sea and Land*, in which ROWLEY aſſiſted, are all the dramatic productions we know of, out of the prodigious number which HEYWOOD, like HARDY, is ſaid, and, perhaps with equal truth, to have written.

Of theſe pieces few will be found regular, taking them by any denomination. *A Woman killed with Kindneſs*, is beyond meaſure the beſt production of this author, and yet there is much good writing, and there are many beauties in ſome of his other productions; but they are upon ſuch ſtrange, fanciful ſubjects that they could come into no claſs; and, as to the immenſe labour he is ſaid to have beſtowed on them, his great merit ſeems to have been good memory, for he has ſo thrown together what he had conned at ſchool, that, inſtead of being original himſelf, he was little more than the emanuenſis of the ancients.

DECKER, at the death of queen ELIZABETH, produced the following pieces. The *Honeſt Whore*, performed in 1604. The different opinions concerning this play ſhew how little we know, with any certainty, of the works of authors at that period. A bioprapher tells us confidently, that neither this play nor the ſequal to it is divided into acts; but

this is to far from the truth that DODSLEY has printed it in his collection of old Plays, where it not only appears in a very regular ſtate, but gives good proof that DECKER had conſiderable merit. The ſecond part, appears to have been a number of ſcenes thrown together, but was never digeſted into a regular play.

Weſtward Hoe. This play was brought on in 1607. WEBSTER aſſiſted in the writing of it, as he did the *Northward Hoe*, and we are told they had both ſucceſs, probably more owing to the titles caught from the *Eaſtward Hoe,* which we have ſeen ſo popular in conſequence of having involved its authors in ſuch diſgrace.

The *Whore of Babylon*, written expreſsly in compliment to queen ELIZABETH, with a view to expoſe the deſigns of the Jeſuits, and ſet forth their dangerous plots, from which the queen eſcaped, was printed in 1607, but it is moſt probable it never was performed. The queen is preſented under the character of TITIANA, which name SPENCER originally gave her, and which was adopted by SHAKESPEAR in his *Midſummer Night's Dream.* There were other characters of that time perſonified, all tending to deſcribe and illuſtrate the virtues of

ELIZABETH, a proper tribute to her exalted merit, and a laudable mode of ſtimulating the loyalty of the people.

If it not be good the Devil's in it. This play is founded on MACHINAL'S Marriage of BELPHEGOR, and is a poor attempt at wit from the title to the laſt word. The title, indeed, is ſo contemptible a quibble that as the Devil is actually in the play, ſo the author gives it under his hand that it is not good; this flimzy ſtuff has, however, been frequently copied, and once moſt miſerably under the title of a *Comic Opera* at Drury Lane.

Match me in London. To this play the different writers have given different merits; but, as it is impoſſible that it ſhould be excellent, poor, tolerable, and good, at the ſame time, which words I copy, we may fairly take it that it had merit and defects.

Theſe are all the dramatic works the world gives to DECKER. He is ſaid, however, to have written, in conjunction with DAY, The *Jew of Venice*, not printed, *Guy, Earl of Warwick*, of which various writers have conjectured a good deal but have known nothing, *Guſtavus, King of Swithland*, of which the world is nearly as ignorant, and the *Tale*

of Jocondo and Aſtolpho, taken probably from the ſame ſtock as LA FONTAINE's *Joconde*, a circumſtance not however, to be aſcertained, this play having been deſtroyed, togethor with ſo many others, by WARBURTON's ſervant.

Upon the whole, DECKER cannot be ranked with CHAPMAN and HEYWOOD, and it is very probable that he could not have been half ſo well reſpected as he was, had not the envy of JONSON, who had he poſſeſſed an atom of good ſenſe would have ſmiled and paſſed by him, lifted him into a conſequence, not only fancied by him but credited by the world.

MARSTON, who wrote in all but eight plays, produced ſix of them after the death of ELIZABETH. The *Inſatiate Countes*, performed in 1604, is one of them, and contains under feigned titles the hiſtory of JOAN, the firſt queen of JERUSALEM, NAPLES, and SICILY, whoſe ſtory had been pretty well handled before, both for the ſtage and as a novel. The reader will remember that BERENGER de PARASOLS was poiſoned for making free with this lady's character, and this queen is intended by ANNE, ducheſs of ULME, in GOD's revenge againſt adultery. Very little is known as to the real merit of this play.

The *Malcontent*, produced in 1604. This is the play which MARSTON, as we have ſeen, dedicated with ſuch warmth to JONSON, with whom he had afterwards ſo ſevere a quarrel. Some of MARSTON's enemies endeavoured to induce a general belief that this piece was intended as a ſatire on particular characters, which invidious report JONSON is ſuppoſed ſecretly to have ſeconded, and the probability is that this gave riſe to the diſpute which made the breach between theſe authors. There does not appear, however, the ſmalleſt ground for this imputation; for by ſeveral writers, but particularly LANGBAINE, we are aſſured the *Malcontent* was a fair, manly, general ſatire; beſides, we are capable of aſcertaining this ourſelves, and ſo far we muſt vouch in favour of the author, whoſe piece certainly goes to the times both then and now; but this does not preclude the poſſibility that particular perſons ſat for their portraits, for ſatire was certainly the vein of MARSTON, and it is impoſſible to be critically ſatirical without fitting the cap ſomewhere.

The *Dutch Curtizan.* This comedy is full of the intrigue of thoſe times, and muſt certainly have had ſucceſs, for The *Revenge, or a Match in Newgate*, which was attributed to BETTERTON, and which

poſſeſſes a great deal of whim and pleaſantry, though in other reſpects it is a ſtrange excentric thing, in nothing more than an alteration of MARSTON's play which was again wrought into a farce that at one time greatly ſucceeded, under the title of The *Vintner Tricked.*

Pariſitaſter, or the Fawn, performed in 1606, is taken partly from The *Decameron* of BOCCACE, and partly from *Ovid.* It has particular merit, but is not ſo good a play as any other of the productions of MARSTON.

The *Wonder of Women; or Sophoniſba,* produced in 1606. This play is is rather imitated than copied from hiſtory, for the author himſelf ſays that he has not laboured in it to tye himſelf to relate every thing as a hiſtorian, but to enlarge every thing as a poet.

What you Will, a comedy, was brought out in 1607. This piece, which did but little itſelf, has provided materials for other dramatic productions ſince. It appears to be taken from PLAUTUS, but the equivoque of miſtaking one perſon for another cannot properly be ſaid to belong to any particular author; it has been uſed in all times, and by all

writers; and ſo the circumſtances vary it may be conſidered always a novelty.

MARSTON having conſulted regularity and correctneſs in the conduct of his plays, and beſides having written them naturally, and both with humour and pathos, muſt rank before DECKER, and eſſentially, upon a par with CHAPMAN and HEYWOOD, eſpecially when we are told that his poems rendered him ſtill more celebrated than his plays. Being, however, a ſevere ſatiriſt, his cotemporaries were not willing to allow him his due portion of praiſe, and poſterity cannot properly judge of his whole merit. What we know of him, however, ranks him very reſpectfully as a writer.

MARLOE, in the reign of JAMES the firſt, wrote The *Maſſacre of Paris*, a ſubject which has employed the pens of ſo many able writers. LEE wrought it into a play; but, without ſome intereſting private ſtory, the ſubject is too ſhocking for an audience. MERCIER in his *Biſhop of Liſieux* has hit upon exactly the method to give it effect. He ſuppoſes a Proteſtant family protected by a Catholic biſhop, who riſks his ſituation and his life for their ſuccour; in conſequence of which the ſoldiery revolt from their inexorable duty, and the ravages of

CHARLES the ninth and his profligate court are put a ſtop to. Neither MARLOE nor LEE did any thing like this, and, therefore, this play is little known.

The tragical hiſtory of *Dr. Fauſtus* is ſpoken of in ſuch vague terms, that, though it is neceſſary to ſay there was ſuch a play, it is uſeleſs to ſay more. The *Jew of Malta* was uſhered into the world by HEYWOOD, and is ſaid to have been greatly received. *Luſt's Dominion* was well received at firſt, and was afterwards altered by Mrs. BEHN, a circumſtance all in the lady's way. We ſhall examine it hereafter under the title of *Abdelazar, or the Moor's Revenge.*

Theſe, with *Dido*, and The *Shepherd's Holiday*, in the firſt of which he joined NASH, and in the other DAY, are all we know of MARLOE. It is very probable he wrote more, and that he could have written better; but, with a mind divided by profligacy and debauchery, from that neceſſary ſtudy and neceſſary rectitude, by the bye, for the meritorious taſk of inculcating morality, indiſpenſible in a dramatic writer, it is wonderful we have ſo much to praiſe in his public character for which

his private conduct obliges us ſo largely to deduct.

MIDDLETON, who produced one play in the reign of ELIZABETH, wrote ſixteen dramatic productions afterwards, and in ſix more he was concerned with JONSON, FLETCHER, ROWLEY, and others.

The *Phœnix*, a tragi-comedy, performed in 1607, is well ſpoken of. The plot is taken from a Spaniſh novel called The *Force of Love. Michaelmas Term* is a mere undigeſted ſketch*. *Your Five Gallants* was printed, but probably never performed. The *Family of Love*. All we know of this play is that SHIRLEY makes one of his characters ſpeak of it in his *Lady of Pleaſure*. *A Trick to Cheat the Old One*, performed in 1608. This comedy was a great favourite when it firſt came out, and is eſteemed, among thoſe who are

* Looking over a LANGBAINE, which I bought at LACKINGTON's becauſe it contains ſome few marginal notes in the hand writing, as I ſuppoſe, of ſome former poſſeſſor, againſt this article which LANGBAINE ſays he can give no account of through the imperfection of his only copy, I find this remark, "I have a copy "printed, as newly corrected, London; 1680."

in poſſeſſion of old plays, as a piece of conſiderable merit.

A Mad World my Maſters, performed in 1608, was alſo a popular play. It is certainly a ſtrange thing but it has a great deal of whim and humour of that broad latitude that, though it may not be correctly chaſte, is, nevertheleſs, provokingly laughable. Mrs. BEHN, however, had no objection to this rich vein of humour, and has borrowed ſome of the moſt luſcious parts of it for her *City Heireſs*, and CHARLES JOHNSON, who, however, was contented with that part which was leſs offenſive, availed himſelf of a part of the plot for his *Country Laſſes*. Other authors have alſo gone to this ſource for materials.

The *Inner Temple Maſque*, was one of thoſe temporary things which were at that time performed upon ſome public occaſion. It has been ſuppoſed to have furniſhed the hint of *Comus*, how truly it is difficult to ſay.

The *Game of Cheſs*. This was any thing you pleaſe but a play. It was ſymbolical of a diſpute between the Church of ENGLAND and the Church of ROME, wherein, of courſe, the former was con-

queror. It was a ſtupid impolitic buſineſs, and ended, though in other reſpects it was very ſucceſsful, in the author's loſing the game, for he was ſent to priſon*.

A Chaſte Maid in Cheapſide, appeared and was ſoon forgotton. *No Wit, no Help like a Woman's* is a play of which there is no trace but the title. *Woman beware Woman.* This is a tragedy, and has for its date 1657, which is eight years after the Reſtoration. It muſt, however, have been originally performed in 1630 at lateſt, and it was probably, revived 1657 by ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT, whoſe reſtoration of the ſtage has no doubt cauſed ſo many miſtakes, his copies only being extant which writers

* In a copy of this play, in the poſſeſſion of THOMAS PEARSON, eſq. is the following memorandum in an old hand. "After nine "days, wherein I have heard ſome of the actors ſay, they took "fifteen hundred pounds, the Spaniſh faſhion being prevalent, got "it ſuppreſſed, and the author, Mr. THOMAS MIDDLETON, com-"mitted to priſon, where he lay ſome time, and at laſt got out upon "this petition to king JAMES:

"A harmleſs game coyned only for delight,
"Was play'd betwixt the black houſe and the white,
"The white houſe won. Yet ſtill the black doth brag,
"They had the power to put me in the bag.
"Uſe but your royal hand, 'twill ſet me free,
"'Tis but removing of a man, that's me,
"THOMAS MIDDLETON"

have taken for originals. At this time it was known and greatly received. What was its original ſucceſs cannot be known *.

More diſſemblers beſides Women. This play is extant but no author pretends to ſay any thing about its ſucceſs. *Any thing for a quiet Life.* From this play, of which we know nothing but that it was printed in 1662, I ſhall take a hint and content myſelf once for all with ſetting down dates, and leaving the reader to conſider of the probability of whether the plays they are prefixed to were originally performed at that time or not.

Before I take my leave of this ſubject, however, I ſhall briefly reiterate that no date, from about 1634 to the Reſtoration, can be relied on, and I leave it, in all caſes as well as the preſent, to the good ſenſe of thoſe who may think this an object of any material conſequence, as my friends the ad-

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RICHARDS, a writer in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond, ſpeaks in the higheſt terms, but in curious language by the bye, of this play in a poem he had written expreſsly to praiſe it. He finiſhes thus:

> I that have ſeen't, can ſay, having juſt cauſe,
> Ne'er tragedy came off with more applauſe.

Now, though this is bad poetry, it may be good truth, and if literally ſo, this play muſt have been popular, for he does not pledge himſelf, but the audience.

vertiſers call it, "to read and compare," in which caſe I expect to be acquitted of intentional error whenever I ſet down any thing that nobody can poſſibly believe, ſuch as that MIDDLETON produced one play in the forty-third year of ELIZABETH's reign, and another in the fourteenth year of the reign of CHARLES the ſecond. But the ſpirit of this will be eaſily given me when we conſider MIDDLETON as a cotemporary of SHAKESPEAR and not of DRYDEN. In this particular inſtance LANGBAINE bears me out, who thinks all MIDDLETON's plays were performed before the civil wars—and ſo no doubt were MASSINGER's—particularly *Any thing for a quiet Life*, and the reaſon he gives for this opinion is that it was publiſhed, as well as the *Phœnix*, the *Game of Cheſs*, and the *Family of Love*, by KIRKMAN, who knew ſo much of the plays performed at that time and was ſo careful to attribute each to its proper owner.

The pieces in which MIDDLETON was joined by other writers are The *Roaring Girl*, The *Fair Quarrel*, The *Widow*, The *Changling*, The *Spaniſh Gipſey*, and The *Old Law*; all which, except the *Changling*, which we are told met with conſiderable applauſe, are very little ſpoken of by the various writers on the drama.

There are other things attributed to MIDDLETON, but with nothing like certainty, and in particular that in a piece, called The *Witch*, he furniſhed SHAKESPEAR with the hint of his witches in *Macbeth*; but when we recollect how very poorly JONSON imitated them, we can hardly ſuppoſe our great poet, in his own particular province, where he upon every occaſion ſo completely left all the world behind him, ſtood in need of a cue from MIDDLETON; who, though he was a reſpectable writer, and made no mean ſtand as a dramatiſt, had nothing in his genius that could furniſh inſtruction to SHAKESPEAR.

CHAP. V.

WEBSTER, ROWLEY, AND THE INFERIOR DRAMATIC POETS.

It will yet be neceſſary to mention a third claſs of dramatic poets; which, though inferior to thoſe noticed already, were conſidered as men of talents.

Webster, who frequently wrote in conjunction with Decker, Marston, and Rowley, ventured now and then to go alone. There are ſix plays publiſhed with his name to them, under the titles of The *White Devil*, The *Devil's Law Caſe*, The *Ducheſs of Malfy*, *Appius and Virginia**, The *Thracian Wonder*, and *A Cure for a Cuckold.*

* There is a play called *Appius and Virginia*, entered in the books of the Stationer's Company, by Richard Jonnes, in 1577, the title page of which deſcribes the conduct of Virginia, "as a "rare example of the virtue of chaſtity in wiſhing rather to be ſlain "by her own father's hand than to be deflowered by the wicked "judge Appius." We have alſo ſeen this ſubject very early among the French Moralities.

The firſt of theſe plays we have no particular account of, the ſecond which is partly borrowed from the ſtory of PHÆREUS JASON, in *Velerius Maximus*, and partly from the *Hiſtoires admirable of* GAULART, met with applauſe; the third, taken from LOPEZ de VEGA, GOULART, and BONDELLO, had alſo ſucceſs; the fourth was revived and altered by BETTERTON, and the fifth, and ſixth, in which ſome ſay ROWLEY had a hand, were both received with applauſe. WEBSTER, however, does not appear at any time to ſo much advantage as in thoſe pieces wherein he laboured with others, his beſt knack being more to find out materials for his aſſociates than to give form to them, for he was a pariſh clerk, and an aſſiſtant at a ſchool, neither of which occupations ſeems very much calculated to give his genius ſcope, whatever talents he might poſſeſs,

ROWLEY was an actor as well as an author. He was very much eſteemed, and, in his manners, and being intimately acquainted with all the wits of his time, and carreſſed by perſons of the firſt faſhion, he a good deal reſembled the French actor RAISIN, of whom I have already ſpoken, and to whom, for his wit, for his elegance, and for his gentlemanly qualities, I could find a finiſhed likeneſs in an actor now living, whoſe abilities would honour

any merit, and whoſe intimacy would throw a luſtre upon any rank.

It is very probable that the advice and aſſiſtance of ROWLEY were of the utmoſt ſervice to the inferior authors of that day; his part of their conjunctive taſk being of courſe to fit the work to the ſtage, of which department he may be ſuppoſed to have had a better judgment than them.

Thoſe plays in which he was connected with others have been mentioned already. There are, however, ſix, which he is ſaid to have written without aſſiſtance. Their titles are, *New Wonder; or, a Woman never Vexed*, *All's Loſt by Luſt*, *A Match at Midnight*, *A Shoemaker is a Gentleman*, The *Birth of Merlin*, and the *Witch of Edmonton*.

In moſt of theſe plays there are diverting circumſtances. They are generally taken from old Novels, which he ſeems to have been well able to dramatize. DODSLEY has printed the *Match at Midnight* in his old Plays, which is full of very pleaſant intrigue, and, in the *Birth of Merlin*, SHAKESPEAR is ſaid to have lent ROWLEY aſſiſtance, which, though the opinion is not ill ſupported, ſeems very

unlikely. The ſuſpicion, however, is greatly honourable to ROWLEY, if it was begotten by a peruſal of his writings, but even then it depends upon who were the judges, for till the world at large give their never failing deciſion upon occaſions of ſuch nice diſcrimination, the conoſcente are too often miſerably gulled out of their reaſon by their own conſent; a lamentable truth, of which we have had recent proof.

DAY, who appears to have been well educated, had a hand in ſome of the plays produced early in the reign of JAMES the firſt, with DECKER, ROWLEY, and others, particularly The *Travels of three Engliſh Brothers*, *Guy Earl of Warwick*, and The *Maiden's Holiday*. He alſo wrote, unaſiſted, The *Iſle of Gulls*, which is taken from ſir PHILIP SIDNEY's *Arcadia*, and had ſucceſs; *Humour out of Breath*, of which we know nothing but the title; *Law Tricks*, which one author calls an admirable play, though no other appears able to give any account of it; The *Parliament of Bees*, which was nothing more than converſations between twelve perſonages, ſomething in the ſtyle of the Moralities; and the *Blind Beggar of Bethnel Green*, from which DODSLEY took the materials for his ballad farce under the ſame title.

Lord STIRLING roſe by his merit, from obſcurity to a coronet. During the minority of JAMES the ſixth of SCOTLAND, he improved by a polite and elegant education, thoſe brilliant parts he inherited from nature. He obtained the patronage of the earl of ARGYLE, whoſe favour he won in quality of tutor while they were abroad, and, this introducing him to court, he was carreſſed, admired, and conſulted by the firſt ranks; till, by able conduct, great merit, and a ſeries of fortunate circumſtances, he was made Secretary of State, created afterwards a viſcount, and at length an earl. His dramatic works are *Darius*, *Cræſus*, The *Alexandrian Tragedy* and *Julius Cæſar*.

The firſt of theſe tragedies was a mere juvenile effort and can never be conſidered in a perfect light, as it was full of Scottiſms, and by no means calculated for the ſtage. The ſecond has a much better claim to attention, but it is wholly borrowed from *Herodotus*; and, indeed, all the works of this author are an imitation of the ancients, and particularly of the phlegmatic SENECA. The third, in which the ghoſt of ALEXANDER is the principal part, and which is founded upon the differences that aroſe among the chiefs of ALEXANDER as to who was to ſucceed him, is ſtill more extravagant.

When he bequeathed his crown "to the moſt "worthy," perhaps he had it in view to perplex the world as much after his death as he had done while living. He ſucceeded at any rate with this author, for the ſubject is ſo complicate for a play, that with a great deal of good writing, aed much claſſical knowledge, it was not in his power to bring the council of MELEAGER and PERDICIAS to any rational concluſion.

The fourth piece, *Julius Cæſar*, is a ſubject ſo familiar to every reader, that it is unneceſſary to ſay more than that lord STIRLING has ſhewn in it a competent knowledge of the Roman Hiſtory, and commented on that part of it with ſound judgment; but this play is not more regular nor better conſtructed than any one of the others, and indeed the author ſeems not to have gone ſo much for perfect dramatic pieces, as for mere erudite productions, for he calls them very emphatically four monarchic tragedies, and, his bringing in the chorus between the acts, and dreſſing up the matter in all the heavy and turgid pomp of SENECA, ſhews that it was his ambition more to be admired in the cloſet than on the ſtage.

Sir FULK GREVILLE, lord BROOK, whoſe life

may be read at large in FULLER's *Britiſh Worthies*, who was born the ſame year with ſir PHILIP SIDNEY, who was a great favourite of queen ELIZABETH, by whom he was created a lord, and who was diſtinguiſhed by his learning and his courage, has a claim to notice here in conſequence of his having written two tragedies called *Alaham*, and *Muſtapha*. They were, however, never acted, being upon the model of thoſe of lord STIRLING, full of declamation, and explained by choruſes. Lord BROOK, however, if he was not witty himſelf was the cauſe of wit in others; for, like his friend, he was a moſt liberal patron and benefactor to the dramatic writers.

This amiable and celebrated character was murdered at the age of ſeventy-four by one of his dependants named HAYWOOD; who, not thinking his ſervices ſufficiently requited, mortally ſtabbed his maſter, and afterwards, to avoid an ignominious death, deſtroyed himſelf. This was in Brook Houſe, Holborn, where Brook Street now ſtands. On his monument in WARWICK Church, lord BROOK is ſtyled ſervant to queen ELIZABETH, counſellor to king JAMES, and friend to ſir PHILIP SIDNEY.

FIELD, of whom a good deal is conjectured,

becauſe but little is known, wrote two plays, called *Women is a Weathercock*, and *Amends for the Ladies*. Theſe plays LANGBAINE tells us will ſtill bear reading. I rather think, however, it muſt be by thoſe who are endowed with patience. They have nevertheleſs good materials but are full of ſtrange irregularities.

The firſt is dedicated to any woman who is not a weathercock, by which the author means quaintly to inſinuate that it is dedicated to nobody. It is warmly commended by CHAPMAN. The ſecond is an apology, or, as the author calls it, an amends to the fair ſex, for having written a ſatyr againſt them in his firſt play. It is imitated from the *Curious Impertinent* in DON QUIXOTE, which has been ſince treated on the French ſtage both by BROSSE and DESTOUCHES, and is alſo the ſubject of The *City Night Cap*, The *Amorous Prince*, and The *Curious Huſband*.

It is not ſettled whether FIELD the author, and FIELD the actor were the ſame perſon. We hear of a letter written by ROBERTS, the actor, to POPE, wherein he aſſerts that the FIELD in queſtion was the ſame whoſe name is always joined with HEMMINGS, BURBAGE, and CONDEL, and the reſt of that

company, placed before the folio edition of SHAKESPEAR's works, and alſo in the dramatis perſonæ prefixed to the *Cynthia's Revels* of JONSON, but ſay thoſe who quote this authority, "it is more probable "that the FIELD, who was a fellow of New College, "OXFORD, was the author." This, however, does not, with me, clear up the point at all; a good education being no more an impediment to good acting than to good writing.

FORD was one of the aſſociates of ROWLEY and the reſt. He alſo wrote eleven plays without their aſſiſtance, one of which, *'Tis a pity She's a Whore*, DODSLEY has printed in his collection of old Plays, and which, of courſe, is the beſt, as no man knew how to ſelect with more judgment. He has, however, choſen it, no doubt, for the writing, which is in many parts, ſtrong and poetical, for nothing can be more revolting than the ſubject; and, therefore, the warmer and more glowing the pictures of love are worked up, the more reprehenſible is the author, becauſe the deeper is the wound given to honour, and to decorum.

"But," ſay the critics, "the title bears out the "the author, and the cataſtrophe is ſo ſhocking that "that all thoſe who may be inclined to practiſe

" ſuch monſtrous crimes, will be warned by it." Nothing can be more falſe than ſuch argument. No warning, no cataſtrophe can deter ſuch wretches as are here deſcribed; and, as to the title, Is ANNABELLA merely a ſtrumpet? No; ſhe is the ſtrumpet of her brother. And is ſhe to be pitied for that? Such reaſoning is equally monſtrous, ridiculous, and ſupererogate, and of courſe reprehenſible; for it is not the province of a dramatic writer to ſeek for monſters, and to record prodigies; is it his duty to reprobate ſuch vices as are commonly known, and often practiſed, in which catalogue, for the honour of human nature, inceſt without a motive has no place; but if it had, it ought to be introduced as a deed of darkneſs which could not be pleaded for or argued on, even by the wretches themſelves, therefore, all we can ſay in favour of FORD is, to wiſh he had employed his beautiful writing to a more laudable purpoſe.

The *Lover's Melancholy.* This was a tragi-comedy, and we find it highly commended by verſes from different friends. The moſt remarkable circumſtance concerning it, however, was its ſucceſs, and its conſequence. It came out in the ſame week that JONSON produced his *New Inn,* and was received warmly, while the other was damned, both

owing in great meaſure to the enemies that JONSON had conjured up, as we ſhall ſee by and by more particularly. This cynical, pedantic churl, who could not bear ſuch ſucceſs in a young author, for it was FORD's firſt play, among other ridiculous conduct, charged him with having ſtolen his materials from SHAKESPEAR's papers, with the connivance of HEMMINGS and CONDEL; and this, together with other foreneſſes, brought about JONSON's ears a thouſand ſquibs, one of which was called, *Old Ben's light heart made heavy by young John's Melancholy Lover.*

Love's Sacrifice, The *Broken Heart*, *Perkin Warbeck*, The *Fancies Chaſte and Noble*, and The *Ladies Tryal*, are ſpoken of as having had ſucceſs. They were well patronized, and highly commended by different poets, who were, perhaps, as happy to ſee the envious JONSON nettled, as the modeſt unaſſuming FORD carreſſed. *Beauty in a Trance*, The *Royal Combat*, *An ill beginning has a good End*, and The *London Merchant*, are alſo ſaid to have ſucceeded; but they are loſt to the world through the ſame careleſſneſs of Mr. WARBURTON's ſervant, by which we were deprived of ſo many of MASSENGER's plays.

DANIEL, had his dramatic writings being equal to his hiſtoric, would have claimed a forwarder place in this work. He was born two years before SHAKESPEAR, and embelliſhed the reign of ELIZABETH, as we have ſeen by giving to hiſtory a poliſh which till then was unknown to it. The accounts concerning him are very contradictory, ſome averring that he only lived fifty-ſeven years, and others eighty. Theſe are points, however, which I always ſteer clear of inveſtigating, fearing to imitate thoſe who are anxious to tell their readers how long an author lived, rather than to ſhew whether he lived to any good purpoſe.

The dramatic pieces of DANIEL are ſix in number; among which, *Cleopatra* was eſteemed a well written production, but not well calculated for repreſentation; The *Queen's Arcadia*, a compliment to queen ANNE, conſort of JAMES the firſt, is ſaid to have been borrowed from QUINAULT's *Comedie Sans Comedies*, and RANDOLPH's *Amyntas*, which is ſo far from the truth, that at the time this play came out, RANDOLPH was in his cradle, and QUINAULT was not born till nearly ſeventy years afterwards. *Tethy's Feſtival* was a thing merely written in honour of the unfortunate CHARLES, when he was created Prince of Wales, *Hymen's Triumph* was

alſo an occaſional thing on the nuptials of lord ROXBOROUGH, and The *Viſion of the Twelve Goddeſſes* was again complimentary, DANIEL having written it as an allegorical repreſentation of the bleſſings of peace enjoyed under JAMES the firſt. So that it is plain he wrote his dramatic pieces in quality of poet laureat, and that he worked hard for his But of Sack.

This, indeed, is the worſt trait in the character of DANIEL, for the ſubjects of his productions were little worthy the verſes beſtowed upon them, and indeed, were we to take all we know of hiſtory, we ſhould find upon a compariſon that the worſt vices of bad men have been often gloſſed over by good poets, while the beſt virtues of good men have paſſed unrecorded; and the reaſon is evident. Vice needs the ableſt talents to defend it; virtue is its own advocate; and thus it is only that, by a collective review of various exertions, characters are accorded legitimate fame.

The other play of DANIEL, called *Philotas*, is ſaid to have very nearly joſtled him out of his ſeat as poet laureat on account of a report, ſuppoſed to have been connived at by JONSON who ſucceeded to that honourable poſt after him. This report was that DANIEL, in the character of PHILOTAS, had

brought forward the unfortunate earl of Essex, a ſubject certainly of too tender a nature to touch on at that time, and the conſequences became ſo ſerious that he was under the neceſſity of vindicating himſelf in an apology printed at the end of the play.

The fact of this report having been propagated there can be no doubt of, but the ground on which it is ſuppoſed that Jonson connived at it is not firm, for it is preſumed upon under an idea that the play made its firſt appearance in 1606, which is the period admitted by every writer that I have looked into; but it has not the leaſt probability to ſupport it. I have no doubt the miſtake has ariſen from a ſuppoſition that Daniel was only laureat to James the firſt, whereas he ſucceeded to that ſituation at the death of Spencer, four years before the death of Elizabeth, during which time no doubt he brought out this play. Hence the predicament into which his enemies attempted to plunge him, and this ſpeaks for itſelf; for what did James care about the earl of Essex?

I do not, however, mean to ſay that this exculpates Jonson, whoſe envy was no doubt as tingling in the reign of Elizabeth as in the reign of James, and the hateful bent of whoſe private cha-

racter needs not this trait to magnify its deformity. My intention is only to give an added proof how little dates are to be relied upon, and to rectify falſe *ipſe dixits* by detecting them through circumſtances. The fact upon this principle as to DANIEL's plays is, that *Philotas*, which is allowed on all hands to be his firſt, he wrote in the reign of ELIZABETH; and, having had a taſte of that danger he was likely to run among his enemies at court, he deferred his other dramatic writings till the next reign; when, in order to keep on the ſafe ſide of the poſt, he went into the other extreme and quitted ſatire for adulation.

BREWER has been conſidered by all authors as a dramatic writer, and by many as a man of talents nearly equal to SHAKESPEAR, and yet ſome of them give him credit but for two plays of which they ſuſpect one was written by ſomebody elſe. From ſuch materials as theſe are writers obliged to collect hiſtory.

As the particulars of this diſpute are a little extraordinary I ſhall go into them in ſome degree by way of a leſſon to credulous readers. BREWER is ſaid, by thoſe who are willing to allow him, perhaps, more than the full extent of his merit, to have written ſix

plays under the titles of *Landgartha*, *Love's Dominion*, *Love's Loadſtone*, *Lingua*. The *Country Girl*, and The *Love Sick King*, and thoſe who accord him this portion of fame, if it be any, among whom are WINSTANLEY, and PHILLIPS, ſay alſo that he was a man of moſt extraordinary genius, which is recorded in a poem, called *Steps to Parnaſſus*, where he is ſuppoſed to have the magic power of calling in the Muſes to his aſſiſtance: thus becoming to SHAKESPEAR that ſort of rival that HESIOD is ſaid to have been to HOMER.

LANGBAINE, JACOB, GILDON, and others, however, allow him to have been author of only the laſt two, and LANGBAINE ſuſpects one of theſe not to have belonged to him becauſe it was publiſhed with the initials T. B. whereas had it been BREWER's, it muſt have been A. B. which conjecture certainly has probability enough to ſupport it.

The reſt, who have been at ſome pains to aſcertain the truth in this buſineſs, congratulate themſelves upon having DODSLEY's poſitive authority that, in addition to theſe two plays, BREWER wrote *Lingua*. Now this happens not to be the truth, for DODSLEY gives no poſitive opinion on the

ſubject, but ſays merely that WINSTANLEY has given this play to BREWER, but that LANGBAINE will not allow it to belong to him, which is all perfecly right in DODSLEY, his buſineſs being to collect old plays belong to whom they might. He, therefore, pledges himſelf to none of theſe opinions; but, on the contrary, ſays that CROMWELL, having performed at CAMBRIDGE the part of TACTUS in the play, which is a contention among the ſenſes for a crown, it has been fooliſhly ſaid, by WINSTANLEY, LANGBAINE, and the reſt, to have inſpired him with ambition *.

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* As this anecdote is rather curious, and has found its way into moſt of the accounts of this author, improbable as it is, it may not be amiſs to notice that the part of TACTUS, or TOUCH, which was allotted to CROMWELL, has in it this extraordinary ſpeech:

Roſes, and bays, pack hence! this crown and robes,
My brows, and body, circles and inveſts:
How gallantly it fits me!—ſure the ſlave
Meaſured my head that wrought this coronet.—
They lie that ſay, complexions cannot change!
My blood's enobled, and I am transform'd
Unto the ſacred temper of a king.
Methinks I hear my noble paraſites
Stiling me CÆSAR, or great ALEXANDER,
Licking my feet, &c.

This he is ſaid to have ſpoken and felt with ſuch force and energy that it bred in him the firſt ideas of that ſanguinary ambition which began with blood, was ſupported by terror, and which, at length, calmed into melioration.

To ſhew the reader, however, how far this author merits ſo much contention, and to what a degree he was ſo dangerous a rival to SHAKESPEAR, *Lingua*, though it has ſome good writing, is little better than one of the Moralties; The *Country Girl* is not known enough for any author to give a deſcription of it, and The *Love Sick King* was only preſerved to be altered into a very poor piece, called The *Perjured Nun;* and as to the other three plays, the very ſame authors, who inſiſt they were written by BREWER, give *Landgartha* to BURRELL, *Love's Dominion* to FLECKNOE, and as to *Love's Loadſtone* it has ſo loſt its attraction, if it ever had any, they have not been able to find it at all: ſo completely have they deſerted the fame of their favourite and their own conſiſtency; which, that it may be all of a piece, has been ſo correct that they do not even know when BREWER wrote, for they make OLIVER CROMWELL act originally in *Lingua*, who muſt have been but eight years old when that play, if it may be called ſo, was publiſhed.

Of theſe authors I have, perhaps, given a more particular account than their merits or my limits warranted. I had a mind, however, to notice as much of their celebrity as would ſerve to ſtrengthen the reputation which the ſtage held in this early yet

remarkable era; but there were many other dramatic writers ſome of whom I ſhall ſlightly mention.

Barnes, who was the ſon of a biſhop, and ſerved in the army under the celebrated and unfortunate earl of Essex, wrote a play called The *Devils's Charter*, in which he has endeavoured to hand down to execration that moſt contemptible of all characters Pope Alexander the ſixth. He has framed his play upon the model of Pericles, Prince of Tyre, for having taken his ſtory from Guicciardini, he makes him his interlocutor exactly as the other author conjures up Gower, the old Engliſh bard, for the ſame purpoſe.

To Basker, of whom we have little certain intelligence, is attributed a play called The *Bloody Banquet*, but with very little propriety perhaps, becauſe the initials J. D. are prefixed to it. Belchier Drawbridgecourt wrote or tranſlated a ſtrange thing called *Hans Beer Pot's inviſible Comedy;* ſo uncertain, however, is all the intelligence we procure concerning ſuch authors, particularly as they get more inſignificant, that this piece has been aſcribed to Nash.

Browne, whoſe works were collected and

publiſhed ſomething more than twenty years ago, wrote, in 1623, a dramatic piece called The *Inner Temple Maſque*. CAMPION, a phyſician in the reign of JAMES the firſt, was author of two complimentary pieces in the ſtyle of thoſe written by DANIEL. COOK wrote a comedy which DODSLEY has thought it worth his while to publiſh in his old Plays. It was called *Green's Tu Quoque*, and written in compliment to an actor who had a method of jeering, or as it is called at this day, of quizzing, his friends, by uttering comically thoſe words*.

TAILOR wrote The *Hog hath loſt his Pearl*, a ſtrange comedy, that DODSLEY has, however, to give an idea of the contraſt between different early writers, publiſhed alſo in his twelve volumes. TOMKIS certainly wrote well, and probably more than was attributed to him. We can point to nothing, however, but *Albumazar*, from which DRY-

* HEYWOOD, in his preface to the play, gives this actor the following character. "There was not an actor of his nature in his "time, of better ability in his performance of what he undertook, "more applauded by the audience, of better grace at court, or of "more general love in the city." On the back of the title is this diſtich, which ſhews that the actor, as well as the author, was then dead.

How faſt bleak Autumn changeth FLORA's dye!
What yeſterday was GREEN, now's ſear and dry.

DEN has accuſed JONSON of having pilfered his *Alchymiſt*. This fact has been warmly diſputed upon the old rotten ground of relying upon dates, which, in moſt of the writers, ſubſtantiate that the *Alchymiſt* was performed four years before *Albumazar*; but we have ſeen how vague theſe ſort of authorities generally are and it is very unlikely that DRYDEN ſhould commit himſelf upon this ſubject without being perfectly ſatisfied of what he aſſerted.

MASON wrote a tragedy called *Meleaſtes the Turk*, of which nothing is noticed but that the author had a better opinion of it than it deſerved. MACHIN, whoſe name has been reſcued from oblivion by DODSLEY, who publiſhed his comedy called The *Dumb Knight*, hardly deſerved that compliment, for it is one of the worſt in the collection. SHARPMAN is ſcarcely known, and the poor glimmering of his merit that has reached us is through a borrowed light in the ſhape of a comedy called The *Fliere*, which he ſtole from MARSTON's *Paraſitaſter*.

GOSSON wrote three pieces, one of which was a Morality. They were not printed, and what we know of them from report is vague and unimportant. TOURNEUR alſo wrote three pieces

which we know as little about. A cotemporary has of him this notable remark.

> His fame unto that pitch was only raiſed,
> As not to be deſpiſed, nor over praiſed.

WILKINS wrote a piece called The *Miſeries of enforced Marriage*, which was very little celebrated, although Mrs. BEHN thought it worth while to ſteal from it the plot of her comedy called The *Town Fop*. LEGG wrote two plays which were performed at CAMBRIDGE, where he was twice Vice Chancellor, ſo there can be but little doubt of their having ſucceeded. They were not printed, however, nor can any account be given of them.

Theſe authors DYMOCK, BARRY, and others, make up all who, during the time of SHAKESPEAR and JONSON, were publicly known as dramatic writers; but there were anonymous plays produced to the number of about thirty, beſides thoſe already mentioned, ſome of which are now known, and two or three of them are in DODSLEY's collection; and now, having pretty well cleared my ground, I ſhall have better opportunity of giving fair play to JONSON; a review of the remainder of whoſe works await the reader's attention.

CHAP. VI.

JONSON RESUMED.

I SHALL now proceed to a final examination of the works of JONSON; who, after the death of ELIZABETH, produced one tragedy and nine comedies, beſides a great variety of occaſional complimentary maſques, principally in quality of poet laureat.

Volpone; or the Fox, was performed in 1605, and has been generally conſidered as JONSON's beſt production. Certainly the plot is upon a very meritorous principal, and the characters are forcibly drawn. A knave who feigns illneſs in order to impoſe upon knaves, and cheat them of their money by working up their credulity into a belief that each ſhall become his heir, is one of the boldeſt ideas of a character that can be conceived, and yet moral juſtice is rendered more complete by making that knave impoſed upon by another of yet ſuperior cunning; ſhewing that the machinations of the wicked, be they ever ſo ſubtle, are conſtantly counteracted by the ſame devil that inſpired them.

The groop of characters that are introduced to work up thoſe materials, are full of contraſt, ſtrength, and nature; would not one think it, therefore, very extraordinary that this piece, even ſupported by admirable acting, has never greatly ſucceeded? Nothing, conſidered ſuperficially, can be ſo unaccountable; but, when the ſubject is fairly inveſtigated, nothing can be more clearly comprehended. Quaint, dry, ſtudied correctneſs, unſupported by quickneſs, ſpirit, and fire, can never ſatisfy. The author in this piece conducts us into a uniform and protionable building, preſents us with an entertainment, and introduces us to company, but the apartments are cheerleſs vaults, the viands are carved marble, and the gueſts are ſtatues.

The ſame objections lie againſt the *Silent Woman*, though upon the whole, perhaps, it is a better play for general approbation; but it muſt not be denied that with the ſame faults it poſſeſſes at leaſt the ſame perfections. This piece is partly taken from OVID, partly from JUVENAL, and partly from PLAUTUS, and, therefore, poſſeſſes the merit of an excellent imitation; a quality JONSON was better acquainted with than invention. DRYDEN, has gone at large into an examination of this play, but nothing can prove that it has that ſterling attraction which begets for a dramatic production univerſal ſatisfaction; not even

that judicious and ſenſible alteration of it by COLMAN, which was brought out, yet not with very warm ſucceſs, in 1776, at Drury Lane.

The *Caſe is Altered*, performed in 1609, is one of the pooreſt of this author's productions. It is in ſome reſpects borrowed from PLAUTUS, but does no great credit either to the original or the imitator; in ſhort, it is one of thoſe inſtances which we notice through all his works how bounded and contracted JONSON's talent's were; which ſeldom reached to nature or her beſt imitators the Greeks, but were ſatisfied with copying thoſe clumſy apes of them the Romans. What ſhould we ſay of a ſculptor who contentedly made MICHAEL ANGELO, admirable as he was, the excluſive model of his imitation, forgetting, or perhaps not knowing, that ſuch an artiſt ever exiſted as PHIDIAS.

The *Alchymiſt* was performed in 1610. This comedy, which was laudably written to ridicule a prevailing folly, muſt, no doubt, have been greatly ſucceſsful originally, ſince we have ſeen it very much followed and admired during the time GARRICK ornamented the ſtage. His incomparable performance, however, of ABEL DRUGGER was a conſiderable drawback from the proper reputation of the author, and in great meaſure the cauſe of the

ſucceſs of the play; at the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed that the beſt acting can do nothing without good materials, with which certainly the *Alchymiſt* abounds.

JONSON's beſt poſition as the foundation of his plays has been the old proverb, "when knaves fall "out honeſt men come by their own," and this he has often ſucceſsfully played upon. In the preſent inſtance his knaves, by not being very great rogues, and by employing their art only to work upon credulity, beget an uncommon intereſt, and the audience almoſt applaud the waggery of FACE, and the dry humour of SUBTLE, upon principle. The *Alchymiſt*, however, will probably never again be celebrated; but this is more owing to the ſubject, which of courſe grows every day in a greater degree obſolete, than to any deficiency in its dramatic requiſites, although the inſuperable objection to JONSON in a degree prevails here as well as every where elſe; for though his comic characters do not actually wear the buſkin, yet the ſock has ſuch high heels and is made of ſuch ſtiff materials, that the characters ſtalk inſtead of trip, and thus we have quaintneſs for nature, affectation for grace, and awkwardneſs for eaſe *.

* The farther we ſearch, the more we ſhall have reaſon to

Bartholomew Fair, performed in 1614. This ſtrange play, out of which might be framed the humour of half a dozen farces, is fuller, perhaps, of comic characters than any thing that ever appeared on the ſtage. We are given to underſtand that JONSON wrote it purpoſely to ridicule the age in which he lived, for the prevalent preference given to low wit, inſtead of poliſhed and refined writing. If this was his motive he has outwitted himſelf,

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ſupport DRYDEN in his opinion that the characters of the *Alchymiſt* was borrowed from *Albumazar*. LANGBAINE chuſes to be neuter upon this ſubject, but he does reſort to the ſilly doctrine of dates to defend either opinion. After all, however, we cannot doubt but DRYDEN would never have made ſo poſitively and in ſuch unqualified terms, an aſſertion of this kind without the cleareſt proof; but, if there were any material doubt, COXETER pretty well ſettles it by ſhewing that *Albumazar* was written at a very early period but that it was common, on account of the manuſcript being kept unprinted in the hands of the actors, to date a play from the time it firſt made its way into the world from the preſs, inſtead of the period when it was originally performed, eſpecially the productions of obſcure authors, and this eaſily finiſhes the buſineſs; for TOMKIS, being very little known, found it difficult to get his play publiſhed, while JONSON took care, no doubt, to bring forward his productions, not only immediately on their firſt appearance, but with all poſſible pomp. The lines in DRYDEN's prologue are theſe:

SUBTLE was got by our ALBUMAZER,
That ALCHYMIST by that Aſtrologer;
Here he was faſhion'd, and we may ſuppoſe
He lik'd the faſhion well, who wore the cloaths.

for there is more nature in *Bartholomew Fair* than in any one of his other works; but yet, being as it is, crammed full of extraneous and hetrogeneous incidents, he has as much overshot the mark as he had come short of it in his *Cataline*, which this play was written purposely to defend; that tragedy having nothing interesting in it, on account of its dullness and declamation; and this comedy, on account of its wildness and extravagance.

The *Devil's an Ass*, produced in 1616. This comedy is not mentioned by any writer as having had extraordinary reputation. The circumstance of giving the cloak to the husband for permission to make love to the wife is taken from Boccace, which has been since used in the *Magnifique*, and from thence borrowed by Mrs. Centlivre. Parts of this play may be read with pleasure, but no talents, however able, could give it a form that might entitle it to success on the stage.

The *Staple of News*. This comedy, which according to the date appeared originally in 1625, was very probably soon discontinued, for it has the fault of *Every Man out of his Humour*, and is conveyed to the audience through the medium of a grex. There is in it, what will be found every where in Jonson, sound sense and shrewd observation, but it

is ſenſe and obſervation couched in terms which, though they may be written, will never be ſpoken; and it is this eternal objection to the pieces of this author, that will ever keep them aloof from the theatre.

The *New Inn; or, the Light Heart.* This comedy made its appearance in 1631, and was ſo ill received that JONSON, whoſe merit, great as it was, fell upon all occaſions ſhort of his inſolence, inſtead of wiſely pocketing the affront, and mending his errors, whether in judgment or in calculation, for the future, printed his play with a libel againſt its actors and its auditors at its head. The trait is curious, and therefore I ſhall tranſcribe the title.

"The *New Inn; or a Light Heart.* A comedy "never acted but moſt negligently played by ſome "of the king's ſervants and more ſqueamiſhly be- "held and cenſured by others, the king's ſubjects, "1629. Now at laſt ſet at liberty to the readers, "his majeſty's ſervants and ſubjects, to be judged."

Were not this a fact to which the world has borne teſtimony, it could not be credited that a man of talents ſhould be ſo contemptibly arrogant, ſo pitifully vain, ſo groſsly ignorant of ſound ſenſe and decorous propriety, as to erect himſelf into a deſpotic

dictator in the empire of poetry, and impudently announce that men ought to think and feel when and how he ſhould think proper to give them leave, or elſe, like PETER's fiat in The *Tale of the Tub*, be damned they and theirs to all eternity; and yet this ſtate, ſtrong as it may appear, is not a particle ſhort of the real truth; for not content with the above pompous title, by which one would think he forbad any reaſonable being to read his play, he prefixed to it a ſort of anathema, by way of an ode, which I ſhall tranſcribe that my readers may judge him by his own words. It is addreſſed to that god of his idolatry, himſelf.

Come leave the loathed ſtage,
And the more loathſome age:
Where pride and impudence (in faſhion knit)
Uſurp the chair of wit!
Inditing and arrainging every day
Something they call a play.
Let their faſtidious, vain
Commiſſion of the braine
Run on, and rage, ſweat, cenſure, and condemn:
They were not made for thee, leſs thou for them.

Say that thou pour'ſt them wheat,
And they will acorns eat,
'Twere ſimple fury, ſtill, thyſelf to waſte
On ſuch as have no taſte!
To offer them a ſurfeit of pure bread,
Whoſe appetites are dead!
No, give them grains their fill,
Huſks, draff, to drink and ſwill,

If they love lees, and leave the luſty wine,
Envy them not their palate, with the ſwine *.

No doubt ſome mouldy tale,
Like *Pericles* †; and ſtale
As the ſhrieve's cruſts, and naſty as his fiſh—
ſcraps, out of every diſh,
Thrown forth, and rak'd into the common-tub,
May keep up the Play Club:
There ſweepings do as well
As the beſt order'd meal.
For, who the reliſh of theſe gueſts will fit,
Needs ſet them, but The Almes-baſket of Wit.

And much good do't you then:
Brave pluſh, and velvet men;

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* This accuſation can never, at any time, nor upon any occaſion obtain. The taſte of the town is frequently corrupted, and vitiated, and perhaps, like a confirmed ſcrofula cannot be cured from ſome remaining ſcurvy taint. Faſhion, whim, patronage, or whatever adminiſters to the reigning folly will do all this; but it is always partial, and, like other alloys in life, ſets off the returning pleaſure to newer advantage. To brand, therefore, a whole kingdom for groſs ignorance, corrupt taſte, and the want of all feeling, for which the head and heart are beſt diſtinguiſhed, and that becauſe a ſingle audience condemned a play, be its merits what it might, is a trait of ſuperlative inſolence that, for the honour of genius, certainly never was conceived nor executed but by the malignant mind and the cauſtic pen of JONSON.

† This arrow was of courſe intended to glance at SHAKESPEAR, and, acroſs the burning envy which lugged him into this folly, a very left handed judgment, induced him to point out the weakeſt play of his great rival: but BEN with all his anticipation of fame had no preſcience; indeed how ſhould he look into time whoſe vanity hoodwinked him every hour he lived? Otherwiſe he would

Can feed on orts: and safe in your stage clothes,
Dare quit upon your oaths,
The stagers, and the stage-wrights too (your peers)
Of larding your large ears
With their foul comic socks;
Wrought upon twenty blocks:
Which, if they're torn, and turn'd, and patched enough,
The gamesters share your guilt, and you their stuff.

Leave things so prostitute,
And take the Alcæick lute;
Or thine own HORACE, or ANACREON'S lyre;
Warm thee by PINDAR'S fire:
And tho' thy nerves be shrunk, and blood be cold,
E're years have made thee old;
Strike that disdainful heat
Throughout, to their defeat:
As curious fools, and envious of thy strain,
May, blushing, swear no palsey's in thy brain.

But when they hear thee sing
The glories of thy king,
His zeal to God, and his just awe o'er men;
They may blood shaken then,
Feel such flesh-quake to possess their powers;
As they shall cry like ours
In sound of peace, or wars,
No harp ere hit the stars,
In tuning forth the acts of his sweet reign;
And raising CHARLES his chariot 'bove his wain*.

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have seen that the weakest works of SHAKESPEAR were more calculated for the approbation of posterity than his strongest.

* At the end of the last Stanza but one, JONSON, though he has exhausted all the gall in his ink, seems to shrink from his own cause and, therefore, shelters himself under the wings of monarchy in that

Having written this ode, JONSON ſeems to have ſit down contentedly under the blind idea that he had corrected the age, and indeed ſo he had in one reſpect, for he had convinced that public, who had ſhowered down numerous favours on him, that he was unworthy ſo generous a protection. In the idea, however, that what he had done was unanſwerable, he was ſo deceived, that FELTHAM, an inferior poet, produced a ſort of parody on his ode, or rather an anſwer to every article of it, that threw him and his inſolent pretenſions moſt completely into ridicule. Attend to FELTHAM.

Come leave this ſaucy way
Of baiting thoſe that pay
Dear for the ſight of your declining wit:
'Tis known it is not fit,
That a ſale poet, juſt contempt once thrown,
Should cry up thus his own.
I wonder by what dower,
Or patent, you had power
From all to rape a judgement. Let's ſuffice,
Had you been modeſt, y'ad been granted wiſe.

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which follows; by which means in this damning ode, where he ſo comfortably conceives he has eclipſed PINDAR, and fulminated a fiat forbidding all poets to write from that moment, he has emulated the bellman at Chriſtmas, or rather the town cryer; who, when he has cried down a runaway wife, or apprentice, whom he warns the world not to truſt, vociferates God ſave the King! But however laudable, upon proper occaſions, it may be for poets, whether laureat, or not, to manifeſt their loyalty, the poet in the preſent inſtance would have given the public a better idea of his confidence in his own cauſe if he had kept his eulogium for his next birth day ode.

'Tis known you can do well,
And that you do excel,
As a tranſlator; but when things require
A *genius*, and a fire,
Not kindled heretofore by others pains;
As oft you've wanted brains
And art to ſtrike the white,
As you have levell'd right:
Yet if men vouch not things apochryphal,
You bellow, rave, and ſpatter round your gall.

Jugg, Pierce, Peek, Fly *, and all
Your jeſts ſo nominal,
Are things ſo far beneath an able brain,
As they do throw a ſtain
Thro' all th' unlikely plot, and do diſpleaſe
As deep as Pericles.
Where yet there is not laid
Before a chambermaid
Diſcourſe ſo weigh'd † as might have ſerv'd of old
For ſchools, when they of love and valour told.

Why rage then? when the ſhow
Should judgment be and know——‡
ledge, there in Pluſh who ſcorns to drudge
For ſtages, yet can judge
Not only poets looſer lines, but wits,
And all their perquiſites.

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* Theſe were names by which JONSON, in his different ſatires meant to diſtinguiſh dramatic writers or performers.

† This hit is very neat, and ridicules very aptly the abſurdity of JONSON, who in The *New Inn* makes a character addreſs a chambermaid in language which has all the logic and ſubtilty of the ſchools.

‡ This break is purpoſely made by FELTHAM to ridicule BEN for having done the ſame thing in the third ſtanza of his ode.

A gift as rich, as high
Is noble poſie:
Yet tho, in ſport it be for kings a play,
'Tis next mechanics, when it works for pay.

ALCÆUS lute had none,
Nor looſe ANACREON,
E're taught ſo bold aſſuming of the bays,
When they deſerv'd no praiſe.
To rail men into approbation,
Is new to yours alone;
And proſpers not: For know,
Fame is as coy, as you
Can be diſdainful; and who dares to prove
A rape on her, ſhall gather ſcorn, not love.

Leave then this humour vain,
And this more humourous ſtrain,
Where ſelf-conceit, and choler of the blood
Eclipſe what elſe is good:
Then if you pleaſe thoſe raptures high to touch,
Whereof you boaſt ſo much;
And but forbear your crown,
Till the world puts it on:
No doubt from all you may amazement draw,
Since braver theme no PHOEBUS ever ſaw.

Beſides FELTHAM, there was ſcarcely a wit of that day who had not ſome ſome fling at this King Log. We have ſeen in the buſineſs of FORD how many lampoons were levelled at him; but nothing galled him more ſeverely than SUCKLING's *Seſſion*

of Poets, in which this faſhionable young, but neat, writer moſt ſucceſsfully ridicules him for his preſuming to be the pedagogue of his cotemporaries. The following diſtich will ſerve as a ſpecimen of the pleaſantry that runs throughout the whole of the ſtrictures. He ſays BEN broke ſilence,

" And told them plainly that he deſerved the bays,
" For that his were called works, while others were but plays."

In this conteſt, JONSON deprecated his untoward fate; for the blows he received were followed up ſo ſucceſsfully that he never produced any thing afterwards but the literary hue and cry was raiſed againſt him, and he was brought forward to receive critical juſtice.

The *Magnetic Lady*, his next play, ſcarcely made its appearance but the wits began to tear it to pieces like ſo many crows about a putrid carcaſe. Doctor GILL, maſter of St. PAUL'S ſchool, and BEN, pen in hand, had a pitched battle, in which the doctor, though a man of no genius, flogged his antagoniſt like a very ſchoolboy. In the diſpute, as it always happens in theſe caſes, the public at firſt intereſted themſelves, but getting cool, the merit of the piece, for it had ſome, fell unnoticed in the general indifference.

A Tale of a Tub, the laſt piece written by JONSON, eſcaped criticiſm in great meaſure by its inſignificance. Writers, however, were not wanting to charitably deplore that falling off evidently manifeſted in the humour of this piece, which exhibits nothing better than ſpirits drained to the very lees, and which DRYDEN calls the dotages of JONSON. Some charitable friend ſhould by this time have admoniſhed this debilitated wit to have lain down a weapon which he was no longer able to wield; but, perhaps, ſuch counſel was wiſely withheld, leſt the adviſer and the adviſed ſhould have acted the ſcene of GIL BLAS and the Biſhop *.

The various *Maſques* written by JONSON, in ſome of which we find found poetry and good imagery, were generally complimentary, and in number about thirty-four, ſome of which, however, were mere trifles, and others written ſolely for the amuſement of the queen and her ladies, who performed in them. The ſubjects are generally political and ſervilely foiſted in to keep him ſteady

* When MACKLIN performed MACBETH at the age of ſeventy-five, SHUTER was aſked in the Green Room what he thought of it, to which this child of humour dryly anſwered, Sir, "The time has "been that when the brains were out the man would die and there "an end."

in his ſeat of laureat; and, as they were generally repreſented through the medium of ſuperb decorations deſigned by INIGO JONES, they can be conſidered, taking them generally, as nothing more than a vehicle to ſet off his ingenuity.

Thus have we ſeen, in the works of JONSON, the prototype of the man. They were full of fancied pomp, weight, and dignity, affected juſtice, truth, and perſuaſion, diſguiſed rancour, malice and envy, and real meanneſs, ſervility, and adulation. As a member of ſociety he was haughty, rude, and overbearing; as a friend, miſtruſtful, treacherous, and unſafe; and, as a foe, dark, revengeful and daſtardly.

He was one of thoſe, who, having no virtue in themſelves, hate virtue in others, for he never could bear to be upon terms with any but thoſe whom he deſpiſed while he flattered, and who, ſucked in the nutriment for their vanity through his proſtituted pen.

Manly, open, candid communication with mankind he diſdained. His repulſive mind could embrace nothing kind, nothing fair, nothing rational. Thus we ſee among all his connections he neither

deſerved nor kept a ſingle friend; and, whether we mark him by his rank ingratitude to SHAKESPEAR, who foſtered him and licked his bear-like genius into form, his poor and cowardly fears of DECKER, MARSTON, CHAPMAN, HEYWOOD, FORD, and the reſt, his unprovoked inſolence to Cardinal PERRON who ſhewed him ſo much civility in FRANCE, his artful intrigues againſt DANIEL, his unjuſt and wanton ridicule of INIGO JONES *, to whom he owed ſome of his beſt reputation, his inſolent and undutiful ſlander of his ſovereign who had loaded him with benefits, or by any other ſimilar brand; if theſe are a fair title to fame, an honourable inſignia of renown, a legitimate claim on the gratitude of poſterity; if theſe exhibit a ſingle conſtruction of wiſe, great, good, or rare, let us quote his eulogium from his tomb and cry—O Rare BEN JONSON †!

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* JONSON could not bear that INIGO JONES ſhould receive his ſhare of fame for the decorations which indeed conſtituted the principal beauty of the Maſques, and, therefore, ridiculed him in his *Bartholomew Fair* under the appelation of Sir LANTHERN LEATHERHEAD.

† We are told that even the burying of JONSON in Weſtminſter Abbey was obtained through a trick; for, that conſcious of his ſlight pretentions to notice from mankind after his deceaſe, he exacted a promiſe before his death of a piece of ground twenty inches ſquare, for his reſting place. This done he ordered that his remains

ſhould be placed upright in the hole made of that dimenſions with a ſtone bearing the inſcription, "O Rare BEN JONSON!" It is pretty evident that there is nothing of literal truth in this. It is every word of it however figurative truth, and admirably depicts the heart of a man who conſcious of his own unworthineſs, and attaching to his fellow creatures that meanneſs, rancour, and ſuſpicion which he found in his own mind, endeavoured to wreſt from poſterity, by a miſerable ſhift, that fame to which genius and worth denied him an honourable claim.

CHAP. VII.

SHAKESPEAR RESUMED.

With the ſame pleaſure that men return from exerciſing the common buſineſs of life, to whatever object they conſider as the reward of their toil, do I now ſhake off leſs intereſting purſuits in this labour, to return to Shakespear; the remainder of whoſe works I ſhall examine, and notice ſuch collateral circumſtances relative to them as may beſt ſerve to ſhew the foundation of their claim to that immortal rank they hold in the records of poſterity.

The firſt play, according to the accepted dates, that Shakespear produced, after the death of Elizabeth, was *Meaſure for Meaſure*, in which there are many and various traits of thoſe inimitable beauties that pervade the writings of this boaſt of literature. Nothing can be managed with more art and underſtanding than the conduct of the deputed

ANGELO, who, proud of his authority, overſtrides that very power of which he himſelf incurs the penalty.

How beautiful is the ſcene where ISABELLA pleads for her brother. Can any thing go beyond this

ANG. Your brother is a forfeit of the law,
And you but waſte your words.
ISAB. Alas! alas!
Why all the ſouls that were, were forfeit once,
And he that might the vantage beſt have taken
Found out the remedy.

And again

Oh it is excellent
To have a giant's ſtrength; but it is tyrannous
To uſe it like a giant.

ANGELO's ſoliloquy, in which he deplores that he is caught in the ſame ſnare of the man whom he had condemned to die, is admirable and ſhews with what judgment the Duke pitches upon this weak, irreſolute, and fallible character, to rouſe the ſleeping laws of VIENNA, while he himſelf ſtands by to prevent any ſerious miſchief; ſhewing that when he ſhall come to exerciſe thoſe laws himſelf, how many ſtrong motives will cry out in favour of lenity.

ANGELO's ſecond ſcene with ISABELLA, where he unmaſks, under the idea that if ſhe ſhould refuſe

him and even proclaim his infamy the ſanctity of his character will ſhield him with the world from all diſagreeable conſequences, is again maſterly.

The Duke's ſcene with CLAUDIO, in which is the celebrated ſpeech on the inſignificance of life, unmatchable but in SHAKESPEAR, is remarkable for good conduct, eſpecially as it gives the Duke an opportunity of liſtening to the converſation between ISABELLA and her brother, where ſhe opens her heavenly mind in the language of angels, eſpecially in her defiance of that weak and irreſolute brother, for whom upon principles of honour ſhe had pleaded. Where, but in SHAKESPEAR, ſhall we find ſuch language as this?

> Is't not a kind of inceſt to take life
> From thine own ſiſter's ſhame.

But this is a vein more agreeable than proper to indulge, for we muſt not here go into a diſſertation on the beauties of SHAKESPEAR, I ſhall, therefore, conſider this circumſcribed privilege rather as a favour than a right, and uſe it as ſparingly as poſſible; and, if I ſhould ſometimes catch myſelf at making too free with it I hope I ſhall be excuſed on account of the temptation.

Doctor JOHNSON, who has ſometimes, though

not here, manifeſted ſound ſenſe in his judgment of SHAKESHEAR's plays, ſays that the ſerious language of *Meaſure for Meaſure* has more labour than elegance. If he looked in his own Dictionary for the etymology of elegance, which is there defined to be beauty without grandeur, he is right, for this language is ſweetly beautiful and unaffectedly grand. The noble virtue, the true greatneſs, and the feminine honour of ISABELLA, are every where conveyed through ſentiments of reſponſive eloquence, and the great and commanding juſtice of the Duke, who learns the temper of his ſubjects to govern them, and who chuſes for a wife the moſt amiable of thoſe ſubjects, are dreſſed in language no leſs conſonant. This ſurely is grandeur of language, and, therefore, according to the Doctor, not elegance. I hope he was aware of the compliment this negative praiſe would pay SHAKESPEAR *.

He alſo ſays the plot is more intricate than

* To ſhew how little credit is to be attached to the *ipſe dixits* of great characters, beauty is here, by the Doctor, applied to language, and in his Dictionary he applies it only to objects. Thus, to prove that there is no ſuch thing as human infallibility, celebrated opinions are perpetually at variance with general acceptations. Thus do Lord Chancellors reverſe their own decrees, and thus does even doctor JOHNSON contradict his own authority, being in this inſtance, if we quote himſelf, wrong in the application of two common words.

artful. This is surely a contradiction in terms. Can there be intricacy without art, and is not a dramatic poet's best art to keep his plot intricate? But these are the criticisms of those who deal in epithets who weigh instead of feel, and who, in a fancied consideration of what they are unequal to themselves, set up an imaginary standard of excellence for men whose genius is superior to their comprehension.

The plot of *Measure for Measure* is admirable both as a public and a private moral. The language is beautiful in the serious parts, and easy and full of vicacity in the comic. The characters are perfectly natural and well constructed; and, were the unity of time correctly observed, a matter however, in the present case, of no moment, it would be at all points a complete dramatic production.

Cymbeline, performed in 1604. Against this wonderful production has the pen of doctor JOHNSON blurted out a most unqualied and thoughtless denunciation. His words are; "To remark "the folly of the action, the absurdity of the con- "duct, the confusion of the names, and manners of "the different times, and the impossibility of the "events in any system of life, were to waste cri- "ticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults

" too evident for detection, and too groſs for " aggravation."

How much eaſier it is to ſay this, than to defend it; and how much more do theſe four, haſty, envious ſtrictures ſpeak the ſnarling cynic than the candid critic. Suppoſe every word of this charitable declaration to be truth, ought a man to be tried only by his faults? Will doctor JOHNSON ſubmit to this ordeal? Are there no beauties in *Cymbeline?* Did not doctor JOHNSON know that when GARRICK performed POSTHUMUS, and for ſome years afterwards, particularly when POWELL came forward, that it was the delight of the public? And will SAMUEL JOHNSON ſo far imitate his exemplar BEN, as to ſay, the public are a ſet of ſtupid idiots becauſe they do not admit the infallibility of his *ipſe dixit?* But let us ſee if the facts to which theſe aſſertions relate will bear the doctor out.

The characteriſtic of that fiction which ſerves the beſt purpoſes of morality, which teaches ſuffering innocence to wait patiently its recompence, which puniſhes vice and rewards virtue, is not "folly;" that conduct by which theſe ends are accompliſhed is not "abſurdity;" thoſe events on which that conduct is founded are not "impoſſibilities," therefore

ſo far the Doctor is unſupported by truth. Nothing can be more moral, more intereſting, more poſſible than the plot of *Cymbeline*.

If the puniſhment of the preſumptuous IACHIMO, the fool CLOTEN, and the wicked ſtepmother Queen, the reward of the ſweetly enduring IMOGEN, and the generouſly miſtaken POSTHUMUS, the reſtoration of the diſguiſed Princes to their father, who had been deceived and miſled, and the kingdom to peace and to happineſs, is not moral and truly thoſe very circumſtances which conſtitute the beſt purpoſes of the drama, what is?

Such events as theſe may be conducted by means too intricate, and I am the firſt to confeſs that theſe are the faults of this play; but to ſay that they are ſo "groſs," ſo unpardonable, as we are taught by doctor JOHNSON to believe, and that *Cymbeline* is therefore a maſs of "unreſiſting imbecility," would be to write a libel upon the whole kingdom; many of whom have the ſtory, bad as it is, rivetted in their memories, and can repeat numberleſs of the moſt beautiful paſſages in it by heart. Even VOLTAIRE is obliged to allow this; why will not doctor JOHNSON?

The ſtory of *Cymbeline* is uncommonly dra-

matic, and after all the cavilling in the world the utmoſt that can be ſaid about it is, that, though the play has but one plot, it has ſeveral epiſodes. The outline of the plot, however, is perfectly ſimple, and attempts at no more than, what SHAKESPEAR has accompliſhed in his *Meaſure for Meaſure* and other plays, the reſtoration of private happineſs and public tranquility.

The tree it muſt be granted has many branches and yet it is extremely difficult to know where to lop, leſt not only deformity ſhould ſucceed ſmyetry, but that ſome vital part ſhould be wounded; pruning therefore was all that could be found practicable, and this was ſo well done by GARRICK, in a conſultation of his friends, that I believe it would be a difficulty to find a play on the ſtage that now, as well as at the time doctor JOHNSON ſaw it, could be entitled to a greater degree of reputation *.

* Leſt I ſhould unequivocally commit myſelf as one of thoſe Engliſhmen who, according to VOLTAIRE, can admire nothing but proceſſions, boxing, and bull-baiting, and who in particular, on the ſtage, are for daggers, ſkulls, ghoſts, and other objects of horror, or they ſleep, I beg leave to ſay that though I may have pleaſure now and then in baiting a bear, or chaſtiſing a monkey, I am an inveterate enemy to all auxiliary helps, and think the ſtage poluted by ſuch monſtrous and unneceſſary introductions; and I have no objection to ſay that I am ſo fond of real dignity and ſimple greatneſs that, were it not in places unneceſſarily tame, I ſhould conſider *Zara* as a per-

The *London Prodigal*, performed in 1605. As this play has with one voice been voted not to have been written by SHAKESPEAR, my *ipse dixit* could be of little conſequence were I to give a contrary opinion which, however, no man can do who takes the trouble to peruſe it.

It has been remarked that two things are extraordinary relative to this play; one, that it ſhould be publicly acted at SHAKESPEAR's own theatre with his name affixed to it, and the other, that he ſhould be ſo negligent of his fame as to ſuffer ſuch an imputation to paſs unnoticed. The firſt, if true, would be extraordinary enough; but there is no material proof of its truth and, againſt mere report, which I have frequently ſhewn has been ſeldom upon theſe occaſions to be relied on, we have the poſitive evidence of our ſenſes that it would be impoſſible for SHAKESPEAR to have admitted of a

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fect model for correct tragedy; but is this a reaſon that becauſe there are ſubjects in their nature complex they are entirely to be thruſt from the ſtage? On the contrary if plots are not inexplicable, where grandeur is intended, no matter how much the author goes for an expanſion of the mind; and this is not a proof that the phlegmatic tempers of the Engliſh require to be rouſed by affecting objects, but that their minds are capacious enough to admit whatever is intereſting and grand, inſtead of being ſatisfied with vapidity and refinement.

ſpurious piece that would either riſk or aſſiſt his reputation, the ſplendor of his talents, and the rectitude of his conduct giving the lie completely to ſuch a ſuppoſition; and for the laſt, if it was only imagined by the world in general to have been written by SHAKESPEAR it would have been an impeachment of thoſe talents and that rectitude, had he for a ſingle moment thought it worth his while to refute the calumny.

King Lear, produced in 1608. To dwell upon beauties that all the world knows and feels is neither novel, nor neceſſary. As it is, however, impoſſible to withhold one's admiration of any thing ſingularly meritorious we are not only entitled to pardon but thanks for endeavouring, by freſh obſervation, to revive a ſubject that has given and will for ever give univerſal delight.

Upon this principal, if we only bring to public recollection thoſe beauties in this aſtoniſhing play, on which they have ſo often dwelt, and with ſo much pleaſure, offering the ſame proſpects yet altering the lights and the ſhadows, the merit of the ſubject may recommend the portrait to notice.

In *King Lear* the three grand ends of tragedy are completely effected. Pity, terror, and delight, have

an equal ſhare of this admirable compoſition and ſometimes one, ſometimes another, and often all of theſe paſſions are excited, in a manner maſterly even to aſtoniſhment.

Can pity be more beautifully awakened than in the ſufferings of the loyal and venerable GLOSTER, the miſeries unnaturally inflicted on the tender, credulous, choleric, but noble LEAR, or the unavailing filial piety of the angelic CORDELIA? Can terror be more tremendouſly rouſed than by the wickedneſs of GONERIL and REGAN, or the blind adoption of EDMUND by GLOSTER? Can delight be more legitimately gratified than by the conqueſt of ſtruggling virtue over inordinate vice?

If theſe paſſions are called forth with all this vehemence, with all this art, and with all this truth, how much muſt we admire the judgment with which they are applied. It is not in tragedy who dies, but who dies lamented, and who execrated. Here are a knot of virtue's beſt votaries, of honour's trueſt advocates; they live to behold the diſcomfiture of their enemies, but it is then too late to repair that ruin of which their imprudence had been the cauſe. On the other hand the infamous ſet who

had dared to put nature, honour, and decency at defiance, fall execrated even by one another.

LEAR, in mind an angel, in temper a man, hopes, by exercising an act of unparalleled generosity, to be thanked and admired by all the world; and in particular by those on whom he has conferred this extraordinary benefit. He finds himself disappointed at setting out by the obstinacy of that daughter whom most he loved, and from whom he expected the most unequivocal obedience. He is naturally choleric, and, from that moment to the end of his life, meeting with nothing but contradiction and provocation, which is wound up to a paroxysm at losing CORDELIA, whose duty he had just recognized, and who comes to deliver him from his enemies, life becomes a torment, and his death is inevitable, and conveys in a most solemn moral, how much mischief may be caused by one single act of imprudence. GLOSTER is in the same predicament.

The rapidity, yet the collectedness, with which the mind accompanies the author from one situation to another is resistless, and the conduct of the action is so correct and spirited that it does not sink for a single moment. As for the discrimination, the single circumstance of the distinction between the

feigned madneſs of EDGAR and the real madneſs of LEAR, is enough to ſtamp the judgment of the poet with ſuperlative reputation.

But what pen ſhall do juſtice to the language? None but his own; nor can any thing but quotations from SHAKESPEAR ever illuſtrate him. When LEAR corrects his haſtineſs, and flatters himſelf that CORNWALL's reaſon for not ſeeing him is indiſpoſition, not arrogance, how charming are theſe lines.

> may be, he is not well;
> Infirmity doth ſtill neglect all office,
> Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourſelves,
> When nature being oppreſſed, commands the mind
> To ſuffer with the body.

The epithet "commands" is exquiſite. How greatly majeſtic is the language of LEAR in the ſtorm? How grand are the firſt ſix words?

> Blow winds, and crack your cheeks!

The image conveyed in calling the flaſhes of lightening, in the ſame ſpeech,

> vant-couriers to oak-rending thunderbolts

is greatly poetic. The next ſpeech in which he deprecates the elements, yet accuſes them with joining with his daughters againſt a head ſo old

and white as his, is facinating as well as the beautiful tranſition

> No, I will be the pattern of all patience,
> I will ſay nothing.

Further on, where he dares the guilty to face the ſtorm and bear the admonitions of their own gnawing conſciences, is another happy and bold object in the groupe, which again changes moſt felicitouſly to a conſciouſneſs of his own rectitude, in the words

> I am a man
> More ſinned againſt than ſinning.

As the reflections are more and more enduced by the objects of horror that ſurround him, they become more and more poignant, noble, and profound. What for ſimplicity, for truth, for grandeur, and for conviction can exceed this?

> Filial ingratitude!
> Is it not as this mouth ſhould tear this hand,
> For lifting food to it?

And then how melting is the following exclamation;

> In ſuch a night
> To ſhut me out!

afterwards, upon the approach of another miſerable

object, in EDGAR, how natural and affecting is the queſtion,

What have his daughters brought him to this paſs?

and upon KENT's ſaying he has no daughters,

Death, traitor! nothing could have ſubdued nature
To ſuch a lowneſs, but his unkind daughters.

What wonderful ſlights has this happy author hit off on the madneſs of LEAR, what variety and wild truth is there in that ſpeech with which he breaks in, upon GLOSTER's ſaying

Is't not the king?

LEAR. Ay every inch a king:
When I do ſtare ſee how my ſubjects tremble.

Having heated his ideas in the reſt of his ſpeech againſt adultery, the tranſition

Give me an ounce of civit, good apothecary,
To ſweeten my imagination

is wonderfully happy. After this ſays GLOSTER,

Oh let me Kiſs that hand!

LEAR. Let me wipe it firſt; it ſmells of mortality.

Theſe are a very few of the beauties of *Lear*; a play that might erect a monument of fame, not only for the author himſelf, but for the country in which he wrote. In ſhort the faults of this play

are trivial, the merits are magnificent; and the fair judgment on it may be reduced to this. It is as its ſtands equal to any thing for the cloſet, for even the fool, though he retards the action, is full of exquiſite wit, and with a very few judicious alterations it would make a moſt complete tragedy for the ſtage. The piece, however, is certainly injured by the admitted alteration by TATE, becauſe it takes away from the grandeur of the original plot and the juſtice of the cataſtrophe. COLMAN brought out at Covent Garden a better alteration, but the idea of ſeeing the play end happily, which is from the purpoſe of tragedy, has now obtained, and, TATE having the voice of the public in his favour, it is very unlikely that any other alteration will be attempted.

Macbeth, brought forward in 1606. When we look at the many, the extraordinary, the exquiſite beauties of *Lear*, it is ſomething more than wonderful that on the following year SHAKESPEAR could produce *Macbeth*, a tragedy ſo well invented, ſo greatly conducted, and ſo inimitably written. *Lear* unites many intereſts, and intereſts many paſſions; *Macbeth* illuſtrates one paſſion alone, from which many intereſts iſſue; and in this it is ſuperior to *Lear*, becauſe the ſingle moral enforced is never abſent from the mind.

Where ſhall we find ambition, its terrible and deſtructive conſequences, and its dreadful and headlong downfall ſo vividly deſcribed? Here, indeed, is terror laudably and ſtrongly excited. 'Tis little to ſay that there is nothing in literature equal to it. We have ſeen monſters in nature, going from one ferocity to another, deface countries, depopulate nations, and ſtand like inſatiate tygers grinning over their trembling prey; but it was reſerved for SHAKESPEAR to mould a man who had bought "golden opinions of the world" into a monſter, and gradually plunge him into ſuch iniquity that his example one ſhould think would baniſh ambition from the world for ever.

Thus the principal character in the picture is conſtantly held up to you, always in a different attitude, and each attitude more terrific than that which went before it. When MACBETH returned from the field, where he had glorioufly juſtified his ſovereign and preſerved his country, his mind was occupied with reflections too noble to have hailed the honours that were thickening about him, otherwiſe than by their fair and legitimate title; nor, till the Devil, in the ſhape of the weird ſiſters, tempted him to his ruin, and inſpired his wife to forward their infernal purpoſe, did he in the ſmalleſt degree ſhrink from his fealty.

How beautifully manifeſt is this in his conflicts with himſelf. He is firſt timid, then wavering, then determined, then guilty; and, what is maſterly, even to wonder, he neither ſees his actual danger, nor queſtions the ambiguity of his tempters, till he has atchieved the end of his ambition. Thus he hurries from deſperation to deſperation; yet, ſtill retaining ſome faint colour of his original nature through his numerous and ſanguinary villanies, he deplores his wickedneſs with philoſophy, and holds his courage to the laſt.

As to keep up the conſtant excitement of terror and to warn the ſpectator into virtue, is the great object of this tragedy, ſo the means to attain that object are as aſtoniſhingly purſued as they are various and material. The propheſy of the witches on the barren heath, the temptation of lady MACBETH, the appearance of BANQUO's ghoſt, lady MACBETH's confeſſing her crimes in her ſleep, the deception of the witches in the cavern, which opens his mind to the folly of his truſting the Devil that had deceived him, are the ſteps that gradually lead to that height of deſpair from which he can neither advance nor retreat; and the few grains of pity at his fall, which are mixed with univerſal execration, make the example more terrible, for they remind us that this fiend was a human creature.

As to the language of MACBETH take it for nature, for truth, for grandeur, for pathos, or indeed for any other particular excellence, to read it is to rivet the attention, and to taſte it to compliment the underſtanding. It would take a volume to deſcribe its beauties, and when the willing taſk were performed it would be as vain and as uſeleſs as to deſcribe daylight.

The imputed fault of this play is that its author has called in ſupernatural agents; but, though there are ſome writers that had better avoid this, I believe all readers of taſte will pardon it in SHAKESPEAR. Certainly credulity might have been played on through the medium of dreams, and various other means; but SHAKESPEAR has in *Macbeth* given us a Scottiſh ſtory, and, therefore, introduced us to people who had a ſtrong belief in witches, ſecond ſight, and who indulged themſelves in other ſuperſtitious whims; beſides to warn the weak and credulous againſt illuſive predictions was here moſt laudable, and this even doctor JOHNSON defends, who ſays SHAKESPEAR was right to do this, though ſome parts of this expedient may now ſeem improbable *.

* This is not the only place where the Doctor has inclined to-

But let me be forgiven for indulging myſelf in a few quotations. I ſhall not follow any chain but take them at random. MACBETH thus argues with himſelf.

He's here in double truſt
Firſt as I am his kinſman and his ſubject,
Strong both againſt the deed; then, as his hoſt,
Who ſhould againſt his murderer ſhut the door,
Not bear the knife myſelf. Beſides this DUNCAN
Hath borne his faculties ſo meek, hath been ſo
Clear in his great office, that his virtues will
Plead like angels, trumpet tongued, againſt
The deep damnation of his taking off.

This heſitation induces lady MACBETH to fortify his mind with moſt diabolical firmneſs. She reminds him of his oath, and ſays,

I have given ſuck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
I would, while it was ſmiling in my face,
Have plucked the nipple from its boneleſs gums
And daſhed the brain's out, had I but ſo ſworn!

How wonderfully admirable is the epithet in the

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wards a belief of the real exiſtence of ſupernatural beings and their influence over mankind. In his *Prince of Abyſſinia*, and his *Tour to the Hebrides*, it is pretty manifeſt; and, indeed, however he may in different places have abuſed admiſſible and ſometimes beautiful paſſages in SHAKESPEAR, he has generally forgiven his flights to fairy land, and thoſe truly happy creations which though in doctrine they inculcate illuſion in writing pleaſe and aſtoniſh the fancy.

ſecond line, "the babe that *milks* me." Nor muſt we forget the ſpeech of lady MACBETH in which are theſe words,

look like the innocent flower
But be the ſerpent under it.

After he has committed the murder how awfully beautiful are theſe words,

Methought I heard a voice cry, ſleep no more!
MACBETH does murder ſleep, the innocent ſleep;
Sleep that knits up the ravelled ſleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, ſore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's ſecond courſe
Chief nouriſher in life's feaſt.

When MACBETH reflects how much more happy are the murdered innocent than the living murderer, he ſays,

better be with the dead
Whom we, to gain their place, have ſent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In reſtleſs extacy. DUNCAN is in his grave:
After life's fitful fever he ſleeps well;
Treaſon has done its worſt: nor ſteel, nor poiſon,
Malice domeſtic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further.

In the fifth act, when MACBETH, driven to the toil and hopeleſs, begins to feel the approaches of deſpair, and looks every where in vain for a reſource, he deplores his miſpent life in theſe words;

my May of life
Is fallen into the ſear, the yellow leaf:
And that which ſhould accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I muſt look to have.

And afterwards to the doctor,

Canſt thou miniſter to a mind diſeaſed;
Pluck from the memory a rooted ſorrow;
Raze out the written troubles of the brain
And with ſome ſweet oblivious antidote
Cleanſe the foul boſom of that perilous ſtuff
That weighs upon the heart?

Then this reflection when the queen is dead.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the laſt ſyllable of recorded time;
And all our yeſterdays have lighted fools
The way to duſty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking ſhadow; a poor player,
That ſtruts and frets his hour upon the ſtage,
And then is heard no more: It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of ſound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Upon his hearing of the approach of Birnan foreſt he utters in deſpair

If thou ſpeak'ſt falſe,
Upon the next tree ſhalt thou hang alive
Till famine cling thee. if thy ſpeech be ſooth,

I care not if thou doſt for me as much,
I pull in reſolution; and begin
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend
That lied like truth.

I ſhall here reſtrain my pleaſure, and leave theſe paſſages from MACBETH warm with the reader, to ſpeak its commendation.

After ſo much violent exerciſe of the mind, no wonder SHAKESPEAR ſhould, in his next production, feel himſelf inclined to treat a comic ſubject. The *Taming of the Shrew* came out the ſame year as *Macbeth*, on which comedy I ſhall have the leſs to ſay, having already deſcribed its merits when I ſpoke of it in oppoſition to FLETCHER'S play of the *Woman's Prize*. It has great merit, as the world can witneſs for me, but its grand fault is that there are in it two plots inſtead of a plot and an epiſode, and therefore the whole play never had brilliant ſucceſs. The comedy, however, which we know under the title of *Catherine and Petruchio*, and which is an alteration by GARRICK from SHAKESPEAR, is perfect in all its parts, and will no doubt be conſtantly a favourite with the public as long as true humour is conſidered as a requiſite in comedy.

Of *Julius Cæſar*, which play SHAKESPEAR produced the following year, the critics have com-

plained becauſe that warrior's death did not make up the cataſtrophe of the piece. Had this been the caſe, however, the author muſt have uſed in every reſpect different materials, and have wrought his piece upon an entirely different plan; for it was not his intention merely to ſhew the workings of the conſpiracy, till its meditated conſummation and there leave it, but to diſplay the conſequences of that aſſaſination.

As theſe, however, are fairly wrought up, and productive of great intereſt and variety, I believe there are few who regret that SHAKESPEAR took this courſe. For one thing it would have been a pity to have loſt the ſpeeches of BRUTUS and ANTONY over the body of CÆSAR, which contain perhaps, ſome of the moſt ſterling oratory to be found in any language, not excepting the contention of AJAX and ULYSSES for the armour of ACHILLES.

It muſt be confeſſed the unities are all broken, and there is much extraneous matter brought into the piece, but the inimitable beauties that ſo thickly pervade it ſpring out of theſe circumſtances, nor do we ſo much incline to cavil at this inconguity, ſince we ſee through it treaſon diſcomfitted, and the death of CÆSAR revenged.

But if, upon the whole, the features of this tragedy are more maſſed than ſhaped, we are greatly recompenced by peculiar beauties, however extraneous. The ſcene of BRUTUS and PORTIA, though it comes to nothing, is very fine; ſo is that of CÆSAR and CALPHURNIA; and, perhaps, there never was a grander picture of the infirmity of human nature than the quarrel and reconciliation of BRUTUS and and CASSIUS. The very ghoſt of CÆSAR is awful in the extreme; and, ſo intimidates the army of the conſpirators, that it may properly be ſaid CÆSAR is his own avenger.

Upon the whole, conſider this play as a regular tragedy, it is faulty in many points, conſider it as hiſtorical it is ſupportable; but, conſider it as an effort of genius, and it is incomparable.

A Yorkſhire Tragedy, produced in 1608; is by ſome attributed to SHAKESPEAR; as however all his commentators, except Mr. STEEVENS, have agreed to reject it, to avoid unneceſſary cavil, we will agree ſo far with them as to ſay that it ſeems to ſtand in a predicament ſomething between *Pericles*, and *Locrine*; for though there are evidently many images which appear to have emanated from the mind of SHAKESPEAR, thoſe paſſages ſeem rather

to have been written for the assistance of another than that the whole belonged to himself. Let the belief, however, rest either way, the merit of it cannot assist any more than the imperfections of it can diminish his reputation.

Anthony and Cleopatra was performed 1608. This play from which was formed the materials for DRYDEN's *All for Love*, a tragedy of most inimitable beauty, in many instances however transcends it, and would never probably have been touched by that exquisite poet, had not the unities been so ill pursued in SHAKESPEAR that the mind cannot accommodate itself to such a stretch of probability.

SHAKESPEAR's play takes in part of the life of FULVIA, her death, ANTHONY's return to ROME, his marriage with OCTAVIA, his return to CLEOPATRA, the battle of ACTIUM, ANTHONY's death, and CLEOPATRA's captivity and death; and, if the question had been for an author to have wrought interest out of complexity, SHAKESPEAR has greatly accomplished this end; for, in the words of doctor JONSON, "the continual hurry of the action, the "variety of incidents, and the quick succession of "one personage to another call the mind forward "without intermission from the first act to the last."

It muſt, however, be confeſſed this intereſt is more extraneous than collected, or rather there are a number of broken intereſts which ſpring more from novelty than reflection; thus, though there are many great and admirable particular beauties, the conduct is disjointed, and the pleaſure we receive it diſtracted by perpetual interruption.

The characters of the piece are well drawn. You ſee in ANTONY, in ROME, the ſame artful orator that ſtirred the Romans againſt the aſſaſſins of CÆSAR, and, in EGYPT, the fond, the doating, the credulous lover that loſt his world by gazing. The imbecility of LEPIDUS, is as powerfully drawn, and ſo is the cunning of OCTAVIUS CÆSAR, who depoſes LEPIDUS at pleaſure, and makes the injuries of his ſiſter a pretence to deſtroy his more noble but infatuated rival.

CLEOPATRA is drawn in a yet more maſterly ſtyle; and, leſt we ſhould fail to loſe her enticing image for a moment, the deſcription of ANTONY's meeting her upon the river CYDNOS, ſpeaks a hiſtory of her and all ſuch voluptuous ſyrens. The burniſhed gold that burnt on the water, the flutes that kept time to the oars, the purple ſails, the ſilk tackling, ſhe reclining in her pavillion, the boys like

ſmiling Cupids fanning her, her nymphs like Nereides, the incenſe that perfumed the air, all combine to conquer the conqueror ANTONY.

This is her firſt ſtroke of art. Afterwards by how many matchleſs graces does ſhe enſlave him; and, unfortunately every way for ANTONY, his firſt wife was ugly, and his ſecond he married merely to patch up a truce with OCTAVIUS CÆSAR; who, afterwards conſolidated the empire in himſelf, and acquired the title of AUGUSTUS by working on the different weakneſſes of ANTONY and LEPIDUS.

The whole of CLEOPATRA's conduct is conſiſtently worked up; the ſame ingredients are every where infuſed; and ardent love, quick jealouſy, unconquerable pride, conſcious dignity, and conſcious levity, are evident in every look, word, and motion, and therefore her language is made to conſiſt of rapture, reproach, haughtineſs, eloquence, and blandiſhment. This portrait of her we receive at the hands of SHAKESPEAR; and, whether we ſee her parting from ANTONY, ſtudying to endure his abſence, receiving the news of his ſecond marriage, greeting him on his return, provoking him to fight by ſea at ACTIUM, conſoling him on his defeat, playing him falſe with CÆSAR's ambaſſador, luring him into ſecurity, helping him on with his armour,

congratulating him on his victory by land, enduring his death, reſolving her own; each ſcene, each ſpeech, has a ſhare of theſe and other correſponding qualities.

There are ſome admirable ſubordinate points moſt nobly introduced; among theſe are CÆSAR's cool reception of thoſe friends who have fallen off from ANTONY, the apoſtacy and compunction of ENOBARBUS, and that exquiſite trait of honour in POMPEY; who, when he is perſuaded by MENAS aboard the galley, to diſpoſe of ANTONY, CÆSAR, and LEPIDUS, and be conqueror of the world, greatly rejects the offer, becauſe they are his gueſts, in theſe words:

> All this thoſe ſhould'ſt have done
> And not have ſpoke of it! In me 'tis villany,
> In thee it had been good ſervice.

But thoſe who would know the admirable and various beauties of this greatly meritorious production muſt read it, and it will then be found that, whatever general faults it may have in its component parts as one piece, it has particular excellence enough to furniſh materials for the whole reputation of any reaſonable author.

Coriolanus performed in 1609. Men of extra-

ordinary genius chuſe ſometimes unproductive ſubjects to work upon, in order to ſhew with what art and management they can conquer the moſt irreconcileable difficulties. To reduce the hiſtory of CORIOLANUS into a play was one of thoſe labours, which our dramatic Hercules has atchieved in a moſt wonderful manner; but after all, the labour is ſcarcely worth the pains, for, except the ſingularly noble character of CORIOLANUS, there is nothing correctly great in the piece.

The high ſpirit of VOLUMNIA is neither greatneſs nor dignity; it is merely loftineſs. She conceives herſelf a Spartan mother, and would ſacrifice every thing to her ſon's honour, and ſhe perſuades him to debaſe himſelf by flattering the people to obtain the conſulſhip; and when, upon nobly diſdaining to follow ſuch unworthy advice, he is baniſhed that country which he had preſerved, and driven by its ingratitude to take up arms againſt it, ſhe once more tries her influence over him by which means a ſlaviſh peace is patched up for ROME, which terminates in the triumph of his enemies and the accompliſhment of his death by the ungrateful Volcians, whom he had imprudently ſerved.

Thus there is nothing effectual nor juſtifiable, taken upon poetic ground, in the cataſtrophe.

MENENIUS, with all his friendſhip and good nature, is ſet down where he was taken up, he neither does good nor harm. The tribunes, SICINIUS, and BRUTUS, who deſerve more the Tarpeian death than CORIOLANUS does baniſhment, inſtead of being puniſhed, live and are happy, and VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and her children exiſt to deplore the death of the ſon, the huſband, and the father, and the folly of having intruded on him their officious, weak, and unavailing virtue.

If SHAKESPEAR had departed from hiſtory, this play with a very little trouble to him would have been complete even to perfection. Who does not ſee that, if the Volcians had bravely reſiſted the calumny of AUFIDIUS, puniſhed him for his perfidy, and made the reſtoration of CORIOLANUS to his country the terms of a laſting and honourable peace, the cataſtrophe would have been correctly poetical, and that a moſt patriotic moral would have been inculcated.

As it is, however, one very ſtrong leſſon is enforced; that it is impoſſible to ſerve the ungrateful, and that the puniſhment of the wicked may be ſafely truſted to the hands of fate.

For the language; the beauties of SHAKES-

PEAR are always reſplendant, and his diction always appropriate; which we ſhall conſtantly find in this play; whether we trace the mind of the truly noble CORIOLANUS, the fondly proud VOLMUNIA, the daſtardly envious AUFIDIUS, the ſimply honeſt MENENIUS, or the raſcally artful Tribunes, whoſe baſe minds never could forgive ſuch taunts as theſe.

> Your affections are
> A ſick man's appetite, who deſires moſt that
> Which would encreaſe his evil. He that depends
> Upon your favours, ſwims with fins of lead
> And hews down oak with ruſhes.

But I ſhall not have ſpace for extracts, and muſt therefore refer the reader to the play.

We have next in *Timon of Athens*, which was brought out in 1610, a kind of *Coriolanus* of another ſpecies, as fortunately handled, and more happily conceived, becauſe private and domeſtic virtue is more a ſubject for the heart than public and patriotic. The ingratitude of which CORIOLANUS has to complain is from his country, that of TIMON is from his friends; one ſubject therefore is grand, the other pathetic, one great, the other intereſting.

It is on this account that *Timon of Athens* arreſts the attention to a degree of facination, and yet

TIMON is not ſo much pitied as that ingratitude is deplored; for there is a degree of oſtentation annexed to his character, and therefore his liberality has a ſpecies of prodigality in it, and his generoſity is rather ſplendour than munificence.

All theſe ſhades of diſtinction SHAKESPEAR has moſt beautifully preſerved, and, indeed, it ſeems every where to have been his darling ſtudy rather to warn men againſt imprudence, which may be avoided, or at leaſt remedied, than the vices iſſuing from it, which when once committed are hopeleſs and without remedy.

TIMON gives; but we hear nothing of his relieving the diſtreſſes of honeſt poverty, neceſſitous virtue, or unrewarded merit, and, therefore, he is not munificent; he is vulnerable to flattery and pays the price of it, he gives to thoſe who have enough already, he laviſhes till his coffers are empty, and his lands mortgaged to pamper thoſe he knows to be undeſerving; this is not munificence.

But this is not all. He is aware of the ruin he ſeeks, he falls by choice; nor is it neceſſary, his follies are ſo glaring, ſo palpable, ſo known to himſelf, that his amiable and friendly ſteward ſhould

perſuade him, or the blunt APEMANTUS rail him out of his imprudence.

This, however, does not palliate the infamy of their ingratitude who, pampered and enriched by his bounty, deſert him in his diſtreſs. The ſtamp of their apoſtacy, of their villany, of their meanneſs is indelible. They are, as TIMON himſelf ſtyles them, "courteous deſtroyers, affable wolves, meek bears, "trencher friends, time's flies, cap and knee ſlaves, "vapours and minute jacks."

Thus all the puniſhments and rewards are equitable. TIMON ſuffers for his imprudence; he is ruined by prodigality and folly, and requited by vexation and diſappointment. The Athenians are ſcourged and are ſunk into ſhame and remorſe at the recollection of their ingratitude to TIMON, and ALCIBIADES, the deſtruction of whoſe mutual enemies is inſiſted on, as the guarantee of peace with ATHENS. Nay even their own gold, which they had penuriouſly hid, is made the inſtrument of their chaſtiſement at the very hands of thoſe they had wronged, for it is found by TIMON, and applied to encourage the army of ALCIBIADES.

The warmth and ſpirit of the language, in many

places, has no parallel even in SHAKESPEAR; but its great beauty is its conſiſtency. TIMON, always in extremes, execrates the whole human race for ingratitude he has experienced only from the Athenians, while APEMANTUS, conſtitutionally a miſanthrope, makes no diſtinction between TIMON in proſperity or adverſity, but rails at his folly in both ſituations, and tells him rude but honeſt truths.

When TIMON, in the firſt act, tells him he is proud, he ſays he is proud of nothing ſo much as that he is not like TIMON. When he aſks him to dine; no, ſays he, "I eat not Lords!" and afterwards to the poet, ſpeaking of TIMON, "He is "worthy of thee and to pay thee for thy labour; "he that loves to be flattered is worthy of the "flatterer." He ſays to TIMON at the dinner:

> I ſcorn thy meat; 'twould choke me for I ſhould
> Ne'er flatter thee.

and then, for proof of his ſincerity, he thus aproſtrophizes.

> O you Gods what a number
> Of men eat TIMON and he ſees them not!
> It grieves me to ſee ſo many dip their meat
> In one man's blood; and all the madneſs is
> He cheers them up too.

When he meets TIMON in the woods, how ſeverely, but how truly does he rate him.

> This is, in thee, a nature but affected;
> A poor unmanly melancholy, ſprung
> From change of fortune. Why this ſpade? this place?
> This ſlave-like habit, and thoſe looks of care?
> Thy flatterers yet wear ſilk, drink wine, lie ſoft,
> Hug their diſeaſed perfumes, and have forgot
> That ever TIMON was.

The language of TIMON is all blandiſhment in proſperity, all execration in adverſity, and SHAKESPEAR has done well in making APEMANTUS ſay to him, "The middle of humanity thou never "kneweſt."

At the banquet, while his own heart is open and he ſtrives in bounty to outdo friendſhip, he ſays to thoſe, who, as APEMANTUS properly remarks, are eating him up, "I have told more of you to myſelf "than you can in modeſty ſpeak in your behalf, "what need of friends if we ſhould have no uſe "for them? They are the moſt needleſs things "living, and would reſemble ſweet inſtruments, "hung up in their caſes, that keep their ſounds to "themſelves."

In adverſity, he is altogether ferocious, and purſue him from his denunciation of the Athenians,

to the digging of his grave, we find the ſame conſiſtent, ſteady hate; equally headſtrong, equally falacious, and equally indiſcriminate.

His diſappointment, when he is digging for roots and finds gold, is greatly conceived, and his extravagant exclamation in conſequence of it is admirably fine; he ſays, as he digs,

> There's nothing level in our curſed natures
> But direct villany.
> himſelf TIMON diſdains;
> Deſtruction fang mankind! Earth yield me roots
> Who ſeeks for better of thee; ſauce his palate
> With thy moſt operant poiſon! What is here?
> Gold! Yellow, glittering, precious gold! No, gods,
> I am no idle votariſt: roots, you clear heaven's!
> Thus much of this will make black, white; foul, fair;
> Wrong, wright; baſe, noble; old, young; coward, valiant,
> Ha! ye gods! why this? What this ye gods? Why this
> Will lug your prieſts and ſervants from your ſides;
> Will knit and break religions; bleſs the accurſed;
> Make the hoar leproſy adored,

Next in the ſcene with ALCIBIADES, to whom he is thankleſs, though his wrongs are one motive of his revenge:

> Warreſt thou againſt ATHENS?
> ALCIB. Ay, TIMON, and have cauſe.
> TIM. The Gods confound them all in thy conqueſt, and
> Thee after, when thou haſt conquered.

ALC. Why me, TIMON?
TIM. That by killing of villains thou waſt born
To conquer my country.—Here's gold, go on;
Be as a planetary plague, when JOVE
Will o'er ſome high viced city hang his poiſon
In the ſick air.

The whole of this ſcene is wonderfully written. Being left alone, he ſays as he reſumes his digging:

That nature, being ſick of man's unkindneſs
Should yet be hungry! Common mother, thou
Whoſe womb unmeaſurable, and infinite breaſt,
Teems, and feeds all; whoſe ſelf ſame mettle
Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puft,
Engenders the black toad, the adder blue,
The gilded newt, and eyleſs venomed worm,
With all the abhorred births below criſp heaven,
Whereon Hyperion's quickening fires doth ſhine;
Yield him who all thy human ſons doth hate,
From out thy plenteous boſom, one poor root.

Numberleſs traits of this nature may be found in this admirable piece of exquiſite writing, with one more of which I muſt content myſelf. When TIMON, through the repreſentation of his ſteward, finds himſelf reduced to ruin, he exclaims, with aſtoniſhment:

To LACEDEMON did my land extend.

To which he receives from the ſteward this affectionate reproof:

Oh my good Lord, the world is but a world;

Were it all yours, to give it in a breath,
How quickly were it gone?

We come next to the beſt play upon the whole of SHAKESPEAR, and ſaying this it naturally follows that it is the beſt the world can produce. *Othello* was performed in 1611. Works of great merit, which carry with them the criterion of excellence, ſoar ſo far above praiſe that the ableſt pens and the warmeſt inclinations are inadequate to do them juſtice, and even doctor JOHNSON has handſomely allowed, that "the beauties of this play impreſs "themſelves ſo ſtrongly upon the reader that they "draw no aid from critical illuſtration."

The more reſplendant, however, great and aſtoniſhing objects are, and the admiration of them is diffuſed and general, the more do they extort from us involuntary praiſe. They are like our common ſalutations on the bleſſings of health and the beauty of the weather; which, though they are ſimple and ſelf evident, are always eloquent, becauſe they are ſincere and heartfelt.

To deſcribe the noble, vivid, and honeſt mind of the honourable and abuſed OTHELLO; violent in his love, ſlow in his ſuſpicions, and terrible in his revenge, muſt be done invariably by every writer in the ſame language, for there cannot be

two ways of explaining what every body have agreed upon.

The ſubtle, ſullen, ſtudied villany of the cold blooded IAGO; inſenſible to honour, friendſhip, and gratitude; who laughs at conſcience, ſpurns at generoſity, and wounds virtue; and the ſweetly innocent DESDEMONA; who, having in the choice of her huſband given proof of boundleſs confidence and diſintereſtneſs, and, therefore, cannot conceive the poſibility in nature of her being ſuſpected, are known and acknowledged for characters as critically natural, and as warmly intereſting, as they are maſterly drawn.

Even the ſubordinate characters are full of intereſt. The brave and generous CASSIO, who little ſuſpects any ill effects from the confidence he unwarily places in an inſidious villain, is made ſubſervient to the malignant plot againſt OTHELLO's peace of mind; in which RODERIGO is the plyant tool that his credulity and vanity completely fit him for; nor is ÆMILIA without a conſiderable ſhare of conſequence in the groupe; for, without her, the infamous purpoſes of her diabolical huſband would not be completed, nor his detection accompliſhed.

In ſhort, for truth of character, knowledge of hu-

man nature, intereſt, gradually developed and greatly wrought up, that continually varies, occupies, and attracts, and that leaves the mind ſatisfied, and the judgment convinced, there never has been among all the critics worth notice more than one voice upon the ſubject of this play, and the utmoſt that has been advanced at all againſt it is the infraction of the unities, which it is agreed would have been ſufficiently remedied if the ſcene had been lain in CYPRUS; for my own part, and I believe I am not ſingular in my opinion, as the ſcene of OTHELLO and DESDEMONA before the Senate contains intereſt and language which has been the delight and wonder of all hearers and readers, I am very well content that the unities in OTHELLO, broken as they are, ſhould remain as we find them in SHAKESPEAR.

As for the language; I dare not truſt myſelf with an examination of it for fear of getting into unwarrantable length. Thoſe who wiſh to know and feel its merit muſt read the whole play, for there is ſcarcely a paſſage in it that has not ſome remarkable beauty. I ſhall however be excuſed, perhaps, for noticing a few of the moſt admired ſcenes.

The ſcene of the Senate, where OTHELLO delivers his round unvarniſhed tale, is for declamation

one of the fineſt things in the world, which might eaſily be proved by a compariſon with the ancients, but that it would be too elaborate for my purpoſe. Thoſe who wiſh to make the experiment will when the taſk is accompliſhed range on my ſide; and to go to the fountain head, for truth, for glow, for ſtrength, for nature, they will not find a cauſe ſo pleaded throughout the whole *Iliad*, admirable as that poem is; and, this admitted, what a glorious thing it would have been for literature had SHAKESPEAR written an epic poem in blank verſe!

SHAKESPEAR in this ſcene does not blink the queſtion, he admits the ſtrange improbability that

> A maiden never bold,
> Of ſpirit ſo ſtill and quiet, that her motion
> Bluſhed at herſelf—
> Should fall in love with what ſhe feared to look on.

Thus it is not wonderful BRABANTIO ſhould conceive that OTHELLO had practiſed witchcraft upon her; but, when with honeſt unaffected truth he has related that he won her by an artleſs tale of the danger he had paſt which ſhe ſaid "was pitiful, "was wonderous pitiful!" and the Duke inſtantly exclaims

> I think this tale would win my daughter too,

With perfect good ſenſe he utters theſe words:

> If ſhe confeſs that ſhe was half the wooer,
> Deſtruction on my head if my bad blame
> Light on the man.

But when DESDEMONA in moſt unqualified terms confeſſes that ſhe loves OTHELLO, that "her heart "was ſubdued even to the very quality of her lord," that "ſhe ſaw OTHELLO's viſage in his mind," and that "to his honours, and his valiants parts, ſhe con- "ſecrated her ſoul, and fortune," no circumſtance of objection remains.

This, however, is the foundation of what is to follow. Nothing can get over a degree of capriciouſneſs in the conduct of DESDEMONA, for ſays IAGO, "what delight can ſhe have to look upon the Devil," and it is impoſſible but a conſciouſneſs of a diſparity between them muſt often occur to OTHELLO; who, though not "eaſily jealous," by "trifles light as air," that "are confirmations ſtrong as proofs of holy "writ," is at length "perplexed in the extreme." A preſcience of all this BRABANTIO ſeems to have had, when he parts from them.

> Look to her Moor; have a quick eye to ſee;
> She has deceived her father, and may thee.

Theſe words are ſpoken in the preſence not only

of OTHELLO, but IAGO, who afterwards makes a a notable uſe of them; and, though OTHELLO anſwers

My life upon her faith,

Yet that they ſink into his mind, and remain latent there, till they come in contact and are called into action by IAGO's arts is evident; for, when IAGO remarks that in her not affecting "many "propoſed matches of her own clime, complexion "and degree, whereto we ſee in all things nature "tends, one may ſmell in ſuch, a will moſt rank, foul "diſproportion, thoughts unnatural." OTHELLO after having ſtruggled with his ſuſpicions, exclaims, "Why did I marry?" So that in this play SHAKESPEAR has again inculcated that grand leſſon for human nature, to beware of imprudence.

Never was any thing managed with ſuch art and nicety as the circumſtances which create the jealouſy of OTHELLO. SHAKESPEAR knew he had a noble mind to overthrow, and he has managed it by artful, gradual, and natural means. CASSIO is pitched upon by IAGO as the principal tool, to whom RODERIGO and ÆMILIA are ſubordinate.

CASSIO is noble, generous, brave, and handſome. He was privy to the loves of OTHELLO

and DESDEMONA, and has outſtept IAGO in promotion. Who then ſo proper to be the inſtrument of his intereſt, his hatred, and his revenge? But this were not enough, if RODERIGO did not provoke him to quarrel, and ÆMILIA to ſteal the handkerchief. Upon theſe confirmed facts IAGO ventures to aſſert others; till at length the Moor, "perplexed in the extreme," like "the baſe Ju-"dean throws a pearl away richer than all his "tribe."

When he ſees CASSIO ſteal away from DESDEMONA, out of conſcious ſhame for the fault that he was betrayed into by IAGO, the artful villain exclaims, "I like not that!" And this firſt rouſes the ſuſpicions of OTHELLO, who is unconſciouſly from that moment jealous; the quick progreſs of which paſſion he ſtrongly feels in his notice that IAGO echoes him.

By heaven he echoes me!
As if there was ſome monſter in his thought
Too hideous to be ſhewn. Thou did'ſt mean ſomething;
I heard thee ſay but now, thou lik'dſt not that,
When CASSIO left my wife; what did'ſt not like?
And, when I told thee he was of my counſel
In my whole courſe of wooing, thou cried'ſt, Indeed!
And did'ſt contract and purſe thy brow together,
As if thou had'ſt ſhut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit.

How well, immediately afterwards, does the noble unſuſpecting nature of OTHELLO burſt forth as he deſcribes unconſciouſly both what IAGO is, and what he thinks him:

I know thou art full of honeſty,
And weigh'ſt thy words before thou giv'ſt them breath,
Therefore theſe ſtops of thine fright me the more;
For ſuch things, in a falſe diſloyal knave,
Are tricks of cuſtom.

IAGO takes this very hint; and, leſt he ſhould be taken for ſuch a knave, which knave he is though OTHELLO cannot ſuſpect him to be ſo, he ſays, "Perhaps his thoughts are vile," that "he is vicious "in his gueſs," and that "'tis his nature's plague to "to ſpy into abuſes," therefore ſays he,

It were not for your quiet, nor for your good,
Nor for my manhood, honeſty, or wiſdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

He next to ſhew how tenderly reputation ought to be handled exclaims,

Who ſteals my purſe ſteals traſh; 'tis ſomething, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been ſlave to thouſands;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

Wrapt up in his beſt ſecurity's OTHELLO's good

opinion, he cautions him to beware of jealouſy, and having at length ſet him upon the rack, appears, as if put to the torture himſelf, to be wrought upon by his friendſhip to a reluctant confeſſion of what it was all along his aim to make OTHELLO draw from him. He then opens his pretended ſuſpicions, hints his doubts of CASSIO, bids OTHELLO remember, quoting BRABANTIO's words, that DESDEMONA had deceived her father, marrying him; and, when by theſe and other inſidious arguments, he has ſhook the whole ſoul of the brave Moor, he moſt artfully utters with affected ſimplicity and compaſſion

I ſee this hath a little daſhed your ſpirits.

To which, his heart burſting, he anſwers, with conſtrained coolneſs,

Not a jot, not a jot,

The whole ſcene is wrought up in the ſame maſterly manner, till IAGO has made ſuch an inroad to OTHELLO's heart that it is vulnerable every where, and trifles light as air corrode and burrow in it. The ſucceſſion of circumſtances, that gradually heighten the plot from this moment, are management itſelf. OTHELLO is confirmed in every thing but the truth. IAGO "is a fellow of exceeding honeſty," and DESDEMONA's to be "whiſtled

"off and let down the wind to prey at fortune." She comes and he exclaims that "if ſhe be falſe "Heaven mocks itſelf!"

Next he is on the rack and vents his fury againſt IAGO who at leaſt he thinks officious.

What ſenſe had I of her ſtollen hours of luſt?
I found not CASSIO's kiſſes on her lips;
He that is robbed, not knowing what is ſtolen,
Let him not know it, he's not robbed at all.

And again, in deſpair,

Oh now for ever
Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,
That make ambition virtue!

Then the tranſition from deſpair to extacy.

Villain be ſure you prove my love a whore!
Make me to ſee it, or, at leaſt to prove it,
That the probation bear no hinge, nor loop,
To hang a doubt on, or woe upon thy life.

In this paroxyſm he rages higher and higher, till IAGO, knowing his right cue, undertakes to give him the proof he requires; and the dream, and the diſpoſition of the handkerchief, work him to ſuch a pitch that againſt CASSIO he exclaims

Oh that the ſlave had forty thouſand lives!
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.

This calls up an apoſtrophe to vengeance, and the concluſion is that IAGO undertakes the death of CASSIO, and OTHELLO goes apart to furniſh himſelf

with ſome ſwift means of death
For the fair devil;

Previouſly, however, conferring on IAGO the firſt ſymptom of his reward by making him his lieutenant.

If we go on to the ſcene where OTHELLO taxes DESDEMONA with the loſs of her handkerchief*, ſhe perpetually reiterating the reſtoration

* This circumſtance has been frequently attempted to be ridiculed; but no man, in ſenſe or reaſon, can condemn it; for the uſe SHAKESPEAR has made of it is full of art and management. The buſineſs was apparently to make DESDEMONA give CASSIO ſome preſent, and the merit lay in its being a trifle, for any thing of more conſequence would have brought on a ſerious refutation. There is an anecdote which has been told in ſupport of thoſe who are diſpoſed to treat this circumſtance lightly. Two Frenchmen were at Drury Lane to ſee BARRY in OTHELLO; and, when he ſpoke, in this ſcene with DESDEMONA, the following words, which he did moſt admirably,

There is magic in the web of it;
A ſybil, that had numbered in the world
The ſun to courſe two hundred compaſſes,
In her prophetic fury ſewed the work:
The worms were hallowed that did breed the ſilk;

of CASSIO, and he demanding his preſent, which, he ſays, "was given to his mother by an Egyptian "who told her that, while ſhe kept it, it would "make her amiable, and ſubdue her huſband en-"tirely to her love, but that, if ſhe loſt it, or made "a gift of it, his eye ſhould hold her loathly," we ſhall ſtill ſee the ſame art and management. Again, in the next ſcene with IAGO, where he is wrought into a frenzy. After this comes the ſcene with LODOVICO when he reads the letter from VENICE, which calls him home and deputes CASSIO in his ſtead, a cunning ſtroke in the author, for it gives

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And it was dyed in mummy, which the ſkillful
Conſerved of maidens' hearts.

One of the Frenchmen aſked the other whether he could diſcover what had put the actor in ſuch an extacy; the other, who juſt underſtood Engliſh enough to know the circumſtance, but not to taſte the application, replied "*Mais, mon Dieu, Monſieur, il a perdue "ſon mouchoir.*" "*Ah, ha,*" ſaid the other, with great gravity, "*ce'ſt bien Dommage.*" Upon ſpectators as ignorant of the drift of this admirable circumſtance as theſe Frenchmen it might be thrown away; but, had they known for what purpoſe it was introduced, they would have been forward to have acknowledged its propriety for the happieſt effects on the French theatre are all produced by trifles light as air. Taking it, however, at the beſt for theſe cavillers, their anecdote is of very little uſe in this caſe; for, had it meant nothing more than ſimply the loſing the handkerchief, the exclamation might have ſtill been ſtrongly in point; for, as Frenchmen all take ſnuff, ſuch a loſs muſt naturally be conſidered by them as a ſerious misfortune.

DESDEMONA a freſh opportunity of ſoliciting their reconciliation. This he cannot bear. He ſtruggles with the conflict, till, provoked beyond his reaſon, he ſtrikes her. Her meekneſs, duty, and reſignation, enrage him ſtill more, and the ſpeeches uttered in broken ſentences where he is ſtung to death at her fancied infidelity, and CASSIO's real advancement, though at the ſame time he ſtrives to keep down his lively feelings, leave him an object of aſtoniſhment to the characters, of pity to the ſpectators, and of horror to himſelf——ſays LODOVICO

Is this the noble nature
Whom paſſion could not ſhake!

The next ſcene with DESDEMONA is greatly managed. He is now every way wrought up, and and it is impoſſible, though his interview is for the purpoſe of knowing the truth, that ſhe can dreſs it in language to be believed. ÆMILIA has juſt ſaid

If any wretch has put this in your head,
Let heaven requite him with the ſerpent's curſe
For, if ſhe be not honeſt, chaſte, and true,
There's no man happy.

But 'tis too late. What anſwers OTHELLO to this?

She ſays enough; yet ſhe's a ſimple bawd
That cannot ſay as much.

After this of what avail can be all the proteſtations of the poor unhappy, devoted creature, herſelf. It is this which makes the ſcene ſo warmly intereſting. We know that it is not in rhetoric to move him, and that the more truth ſtares him in the face, the more the phantom that haunts him dreſſes it in the garb of falſehood, and yet we flatter ourſelves that he will be undeceived.

Innocence, conſciouſneſs, and rectitude, weigh nothing. He deplores the falſehood he believes, and will not ſee the verity that ſolicits him. He is diſtracted at the ingenuous ſweetneſs he fancies ſhe puts on, and is confirmed in his rooted ſuſpicions by the very courage with which ſhe meets his unmerited ingratitude; his nature ſuffers, but a falſe pride tempts him to falſe juſtice, and nothing can now prevent her fate.

DESDEMONA's ſcene with ÆMILIA, and afterwards with the inexorable villain IAGO, are beautifully tender and irreſiſtibly melting. Her ſweet lamentations are exquiſite. IAGO's hypocriſy is happy, and ÆMILIA's quick reſentment in which SHAKESPEAR has moſt fortunately blended the amiable in the virago, is truly the ebulition of an honeſt, enraged, feminine heart.

She ſays that ſome eternal villain has deviſed the ſlander, to which IAGO replies,

> If any ſuch there be, heaven pardon him!
> ÆMIL. A halter pardon him! and Hell gnaw his bones!
> The Moor's abuſed by ſome villainous knave.
> O, Heaven! that ſuch companions thoud'ſt unfold;
> And put in every honeſt hand a whip,
> To laſh the raſcal naked through the world.

We are now ripe for the cataſtrophe, which, if it has any fault, is too ſhocking. DESDEMONA's ordering her wedding ſheets to be put on the bed is mournfully moving, and the labouring of OTHELLO's ſwelling heart, while he meditates the murder, is awful to aſtoniſhment. "It is the cauſe "my ſoul," I'll not ſhed her blood," "yet ſhe "muſt die," "put out the light," and the conſequent remarks, upon theſe broken phraſes are highly intereſting.

DESDEMONA's waking, her inviting OTHELLO to bed, her gradual apprehenſions, and at length her reading her fate in his eyes, which ſhe ſays are fatal when they roll, are full of dread and terror. Theſe ſenſations increaſe as her juſtification of herſelf induces her to call for CASSIO to undeceive him, for this brings to the recollection of OTHELLO the orders he had given IAGO.

> DES. What is he dead?

OTH. Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
Had ſtomach for them all.
DES. Alas he is betrayed, and I undone.

Nothing upon earth can breathe the language of an innocent and injured mind more than this laſt line, but how can the tortured ſoul of OTHELLO ſee this?

Out ſtrumpet! weep'ſt thou for him to my face?

Her fate is now inevitable; his rage is at its utmoſt, and the dreadful conſequence follows.

In the next ſcene with EMILIA, which is requiſite to the detection of IAGO, a ſtrong intereſt is ſtill kept up. The faithful creature, hurt to death at the ſcene before, is all heart; and when OTHELLO confeſſes that IAGO ſet him on, ſhe exclaims

My huſband ſay that ſhe was falſe!
OTH. Thy huſband honeſt, honeſt, IAGO.
ÆM. If he ſay ſo, may his pernicious ſoul
Rot half a grain a day! he lies to the heart;
She was too fond of her moſt filthy bargain.

All the rhapſody that follows is equally warm, vivid, and forcible. The other characters are attracted by the alarm; the credulous Moor is undeceived, and the deteſted IAGO doomed to the torture. OTHELLO's death is but too neceſſary, and he falls admired, cenſured, and lamented; or in his own better words "an honourable murderer."

There are yet two plays of SHAKESPEAR to be examined, The *Tempeſt*, which appeared in 1612, and *Twelfth Night*, produced in 1614. The firſt is a freſh inſtance of the creative fancy of this incomparable writer, and the other a fair and moſt humourous deſcription of natual manners.

Perhaps nothing can be ſuperior to the great diverſity, extenſive variety, the oppoſition of intelligent to vulgar characters, aeriel to earthly, the admirable judgment, the philoſophic grandeur, and the ſtrong juſtice that mark the *Tempeſt*, or the elegant nature, the true humour, the whimſical equivoque, the neat point, the irreſiſtible pleaſantry that characterize *Twelfth Night*.

In the *Tempeſt*, the noble revenge of PROSPERO, the fallen ambition of ALONZO and ANTONIO, and the union of FERDINAND and MIRANDA are ſtrong circumſtances, and as greatly treated as they are poetically conceived. The magic is of that kind which in SHAKESPEAR we are impelled to call natural, and the diſtinction between the ſprite ARIEL, and the monſter CALIBAN, could originate from no other mind. Upon the whole there is ſuch a mixture of grandeur, pathos, nature, pleaſantry, and intereſt; that, at the ſame time every curioſity is on tip toe, every wiſh is gratified.

As to the language; I could, with much pleasure, and without any difficulty, get myself into the same scrape as I did in the examination of *Othello*; but I must put a curb on my inclination; not, however, without noticing that from this play the critics have very judiciously selected the propereſt ſpeech in the works of SHAKESPEAR, or, indeed, in the empire of letters, to ſerve for his epitaph *.

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* As I wiſh as much that the errors of SHAKESPEAR, when they appear to be material, or have generally been conſidered ſo, ſhould meet inveſtigation, as to have his beauties, were it poſſible, enumerated, I think it highly neceſſary to notice here the cenſure that has been paſt on his ignorance of nautical terms, as they are applied in this play, which cenſure has been played off as unſparingly as ignorantly. I agree that DRYDEN's ſea terms are much more correct, and even more poetical than thoſe of SHAKESPEAR, and whoever reads his *Annus Mirabiles* muſt acknowledge that he even exceeds in many places the celebrated poem of the *Shipwreck*, by FALCONER, not, however, without having run himſelf into quaintneſs; but navigation was a very different thing at the time of DRYDEN, and of SHAKESPEAR. In that interval we had been taught in great meaſure nautical tactics by the French, which again we had improved upon, and I very much queſtion whether a young poſt captain made at this time, though in every reſpect an admirable ſeaman, would be able to deſcribe in what manner ſir WALTER RALEIGH manœuvred a fleet. If this be true it will be extremely difficult to to detect inaccuracy in mere techenical words, which in every profeſſion are perpetually varying. We are told that SHAKESPEAR talks of the maſter's whiſtle, although there is a boatſwain aboard; but there is not ſo much impropriety in this upon examination, for as there are different grades in the army, from the enſign to the colonel, and the ſerjeant to the major, ſo there are in the navy, from

As for *Twelfth Night;* if, in the violent love of

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the midſhipman to the admiral, and the under mates of different deſcriptions to the maſter; and to prove the immediate connection between the maſter and the boatſwain, the French have no other term for boatſwain but *contre-maitre.* Thus the whiſtle is effectively the whiſtle of the maſter, ſince it is as much uſed by his command as the drum is by the command of the major when he takes out the battalion; and to which we may add that different nations have different modes. The veſſel in queſtion belonged to NAPLES, and tis known that there we find brigantines, ſchooners, xebecs, bilanders, galliots, and others that go in the catalogue for ſhips, and that they have different ſails and conſequently different officers. This apparent miſtake, therefore, however it might ſhock the ears of a midſhipman of the preſent day, might for ought we know to the contrary be both figuratively and literally right at the time of SHAKESPEAR, for the reſt of his phraſes, though not faſhionable, are eaſily underſtood. "Take in the topſail" is a very good phraſe, eſpecially as the wind encreaſes, and it is a good preparation for "down with the topmaſt," which is the next word of command. He might to be ſure have ſaid which topſail, and which topmaſt, but this is mere cavil; for he ſays immediately afterwards, "bring her to try under maincourſe." Now bring her to try, the ſituation being a ſtorm, is an admirable phraſe, and under maincourſe means without doubt under the mainſail, for the lower ſails are the courſes; and, to prove that he not only is correct, but that he underſtood pretty well what was to be done with a veſſel in ſuch a ſituation, having ſet the mainſail after the topſail is lowered, the next command is "lay her a hold," which is what we underſtand now to be keep a good hold of the land; but inſtantly, upon finding this difficult, the orders are ſuddenly altered to "ſet the two courſes, off to ſea again, lay her off," confirming the fourth ſpeech in the play "Blow till thou burſt thy "wind if room enough," which by the way is a ſailor's conſtant obſervation, and theſe two courſes ſhew ſhe was not a ſhip but ſome veſſel of two maſts. Immediately after this manœuvre, the mariners

ORSINO for OLIVIA, her ſudden attachment to VIOLA, the marriage, under the likeneſſes ſhe bears to her brother SEBASTIAN, and he to her, huddled up with more ſpeed than prudence, and at laſt ORSINO's willingneſs to forego his former paſſion and wed VIOLA, we find more perplexity than art, more creation than nature; we are abundantly recompenſed by ſome of the fineſt ſtrokes of humour the ſtage has produced in the ſcenes between ſir TOBY, ſir ANDREW AGUE-CHEEK, and the reſt.

The trick played by this ſet upon MALVOLIO is moſt happily comic; and, though perfectly natural, is ſo ſingularly whimſical, that SHAKESPEAR himſelf is conſtrained to make FABIAN ſay, "If this were "played upon a ſtage now, I would condemn it as "an impoſſible fiction."

The language of *Twelfth Night* is full of beauty

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cry "All's loſt," and the ſhip inſtantly ſinks, and thus ſhe is clearly broached to, or brought by the lee, the violence of the ſtorm having rendered all their endeavours to ſave her impracticable; ſo that if SHAKESPEAR did not know how to ſink a ſhip *ſecundem artem*, chance did a great deal for him in this regular and probable progreſs. Moſt of the cavil againſt SHAKESPEAR having ariſen from his uſe of phraſes which have become obſolete, and ſea phraſes being more likely than any others to become ſo in conſequence of their perpetual corruption through an intercourſe with all nations, let us good naturedly allow him a little judgment of this ſubject who knew ſo incomparably every other.

judgment, and maturity; and we are taught by it to regret the prodigious literary treaſure which would have been the further boaſt of this kingdom had SHAKESPEAR been bleſt with longer life, and continued to labour for the advantage and amuſement of mankind. The ſpeech, "She never told her love," &c. is in every body's mouth, and many other admirable paſſages are all well remembered.

With this play, which finiſhed the brilliant career of SHAKESPEAR, I have brought up my account of that aſſemblage of dramatic talents that ornamented the reign of JAMES the firſt; an era, notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid againſt it, which certainly has no parallel, and when we take in the conſideration of the ſhort time the theatre had emancipated from the rudeſt barbariſm and arrived to a degree of perfection it never knew before throughout the world, and which I am afraid it will never know again; and, alſo that this perfection was ſolely and entirely owing to SHAKESPEAR, the proud concluſion for the honour of this country is too decided to need an obſervation *.

* When I come to examine the wits of CHARLES the ſecond, I ſhall fulfil an unwilling duty by ſhewing how unjuſtly SHAKESPEAR and his cotemporaries are aſperſed to ſet off the dramatic writings of

In ſhort, though there are many faults which attach to every writer of that time, theſe are faults magnified by a compariſon with SHAKESPEAR's more reſplendant abilities. More dramatic poets wrote then and their various perfections were more univerſally felt than ſince, but they were planets and their ſatelites, to which SHAKESPEAR was the ſun. JONSON wrote for the learned, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER for the faſhionable, MASSINGER for the elegant, but SHAKESPEAR wrote for all the world.

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that time, when general poetry had certainly advanced into great reputation, but dramatic poetry had proportionably fallen off. DRYDEN, who in this inſtance loſt ſight of all candour and liberality, caluminated what he could not equal; for he was hardly ever great without rhime, which, however it might have been agreeable to CHARLES the ſecond, who was juſt arrived from FRANCE, and rapt up in CORNEILLE, and the reſt, is not the language of nature; and this proves that it is one thing to be a poet, and another thing to be a dramatic poet.

CHAP. IX.

PLAYHOUSES AND ACTORS.

I HAVE ſhewn that about ſeventy plays were produced in the interval between 1589 and 1603. From that time to the death of JAMES the firſt, a period of twenty two years, there were probably about one hundred and ninety pieces brought out which were acknowledged by their authors, and about thirty, of which the authors were concealed, indeed we have accounts of a larger number but I think the remainder, amounting to about twenty-five, were performed between the death of JAMES and the commencement of the troubles of CHARLES the firſt.

We may, however, ſet down fairly that ten plays, on an average, beſides two, or perhaps three maſques, in a year, during that period, were preſented to the public, and this induces us fully to believe that theatres multiplied very faſt owing to the various contentions of ſo many authors; but it

is not, therefore, to be taken for granted that they had all regular companies, or that plays were acted in them all at one time; but rather that they were ſome of them ſubordinate to the reſt, or that the companies of performers ſhifted about occaſionally to them, as it might from various cauſes ſuit their convenience,

We hear of no regular licence, under the Privy Seal, to any perſon or ſet of perſons except that granted in the firſt year of JAMES, to SHAKESPEAR, FLETCHER, BURBAGE, HEMMINGS, CONDEL, and others, and as this authorized them not only to exhibit plays at their uſual houſe the Globe, on the Bank Side, but wherever elſe they thought proper, it is poſſible, for they were not then encumbered with ſcenes, that they might perform at different places for the better accommodation of thoſe who lived in the vicinities of the reſpectives theatres.

We know that SHAKESPEAR's company occupied the Globe and Blackfriers, and alſo a winter and ſummer houſe, at either of which when they performed they were called the King's Servants, ſo that here are four houſes belonging to one concern. The company at the Phœnix in Drury Lane, were called the Queen's Servants, and the private theatre in Saliſbury Court, were called the Prince's Servants,

but there is nothing that leads us to a knowledge of who the actors were that made up theſe two companies, whereas almoſt the whole of SHAKESPEAR'S company are not only known by name but we have already ſeen a good deal of their reſpective merits.

Theſe ſix theatres, the Red Bull, in St. John's Street, and the Fortune, near White Croſs Street, ſeem to have attracted the principal notice at the time of which we are ſpeaking; the firſt being appropriated for the reception of genteel companies, and the latter for citizens and the inferior deſcription of perſons. It is poſſible the Curtain, and the Theatre, which had been built a great many years before, were at this time ſhut up, and what induces us to believe this is, that ALLEYN, when he became manager of the Fortune, was obliged to take it down and rebuild it; at which time he is ſaid to have diſcovered that treaſure with which he erected and endowed Dulwich Hoſpital.

This ridiculous report has been credited on no other ground than that it is not eaſy, in any rational way, to account for ALLEYN's having amaſſed the very large riches he is ſaid to have poſſeſſed, which had they amounted to no more than the eight hundred a year, the endowment of Dulwich, would have been at that time an immenſe fortune for a perſon

in his ſituation. He is ſaid to have been an excellent actor, and to have been very ſucceſsful; but who was at that time ſo ſucceſsful as SHAKESPEAR? and yet he died in no ſtate, though the world ſubſcribes to his prudence, to keep his family above mediocrity, much leſs to build and endow an hoſpital.

ALLEYN's fortune no doubt proceeded partly from marrying three wives, each of whom brought a handſome portion, partly from the ſucceſs of his theatre, partly from his being keeper of the king's wild beaſts and maſter of the Royal Bear Garden, and partly from his being a moſt rigid and penurious economiſt, which character he ſo ſtrictly enjoined himſelf that he was the firſt penſioner in his own charity; probably in imitation of RAHERE, who founded, as we have ſeen, St. Bartholomew's Priory, in which he became the firſt prior *.

* However ALLEYN procured his fortune, and whatever were his motive for building his hoſpital, he deſerves for ever the thanks of his own fraternity for perpetuating a trait that reflects the higheſt honour on that profeſſion which fools only have conſidered as diſhonourable. His influence muſt have been very great; for he obtained liberty to endow his charity, notwithſtanding the repreſentation of the great Chancellor BACON, who wrote upon this occaſion the following letter to the marquis of BUCKINGHAM.

"I now write to give the king an account of a patent I have

The Fortune Theatre did very well but it was only frequented, as we have ſeen, by thoſe who could afford to pay low prices; and, in other reſpects, could not be in ſuch repute as thoſe places over which SHAKESPEAR preſided; for none of the plays in great eſtimation were brought out there but on the contrary they were all performed either at the Globe, or Blackfriers, or at the Phœnix, and as we hear very little of any of the other theatres by which we can deſcribe their ſucceſs and the nature

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" ſtayed at the ſeal: it is of licence to give in mortmain eight hun-
" dred pound land, though it be of tenure in chief, to ALLEN
" that was a player, for an hoſpital. I like well that ALLEN
" playeth the laſt act of his life ſo well; but if his majeſty give
" away thus to amortize his tenures, his court of wards will decay;
" which I had well hoped ſhould improve. But that which moved
" me chiefly, is that his majeſty now lately did abſolutely deny ſir
" HENRY SAVILE for two hundred pounds, and ſir EDWARD
" SANDYS for one hundred pounds, to the perpetuating of two
" lectures, the one in OXFORD, the other in CAMBRIDGE, foun-
" dations of ſingular honour to his majeſty, and of which there is
" great want; whereas hoſpitals abound, and beggars abound
" never a whit the leſs. If his majeſty do like to paſs the book at
" all, yet if he would be pleaſed to abridge the eight hundred
" pounds to five hundred pounds, and then give way to the other
" two books for the univerſity, it were a princely work; and I
" would make an humble ſuit to the king, and deſire your lordſhip
" to join it, that it might be ſo."

Theſe reaſons were certainly very cogent; but he received orders, nevertheleſs, to affix the great ſeal to the patent, and ALLEYN laid the firſt ſtone of his hoſpital on the thirteenth of September, 1619.

of their entertainments by any eſtabliſhed criterion. I do not think it improbable, if they were not uſed occaſionally by the eſtabliſhed company, that they were either appropriated to the acting of plays for the amuſement of noblemen who kept their reſpective actors, or elſe their amuſements conſiſted like Sadler's Wells of ſomething inferior to thoſe of the regular theatres, eſpecially as Maſques were ſo much the faſhion in thoſe times.

This is, however, mere conjecture, and we have one proof, a ſtrange one to be ſure, that regular plays were acted at the Fortune at leaſt; for we are ſolemnly told that ALLEYN "performing a "Dæmon with ſix others, in one of SHAKESPEAR'S "plays, was in the midſt of the play ſurprized by "an apparation of the Devil; this ſo worked upon "his fancy that he made a vow which he per-"formed by building Dulwich Hoſpital *."

* There is ſomething very curious in this anecdote. Why the Devil, who is not in general ſuppoſed to be a very charitable character, ſhould be ſo anxious to frighten a man into building an hoſpital is not very eaſy to be underſtood. Why he ſhould particularly pitch upon ALLEYN for this philanthropic purpoſe is altogether as extraordinary; but it is ſtill more extraordinary that their devil ſhould have ſo left them in the lurch as not to have ſuggeſted a more probable vehicle for the propagation of this fact; for throughout all the great and unbounded variety in the works of SHAKESPEAR there is not a ſingle play in which we find ſeven dancing devils.

However all this may have been, ALLEYN ſeems to have challenged and received the higheſt reſpect from all ranks. He was indeed the ROSCIUS of his time, for, ſays FULLER, "he was a "youth of excellent capacity, a chearful temper, "a tenacious memory, a ſweet elocution, and, in "his perſon, of a ſtately port and aſpect."

FULLER however, with that vulgar contempt, and ignorant prejudice, with which the profeſſion of of an actor is too often treated, congratulates ALLEYN's father on having withheld from him a liberal education, which he thinks would only have fitted him for a more ſerious courſe of life. By which, if ALLEYN had the extraordinary talents we are taught to allow him, he without intention pays him a compliment, for it is ſometimes better that nature ſhould furniſh an education than the ſchools; but if he would intimate that the inſtruction promulgated from the ſtage is ſo ſuperficial and immaterial as to require only ſlender and uninformed talents, every man of liberal intelligence muſt hold his opinion in ſovereign contempt.

HEYWOOD compares ALLEYN to Proteus for change, and to ROSCIUS for eloquence. He is ſaid to have performed originally the principal cha-

racters in SHAKESPEAR'S and JONSON'S plays; but we have never been told what thoſe characters were, and indeed the fact does not ſeem to be confirmed, at leaſt as to his having performed them originally, for not one of thoſe plays came out at his theatre; and, as we have plenty of corroboration that BURBAGE was the original RICHARD the third, LOWIN the firſt HAMLET, and other facts of the ſame complexion, there is ſuffiencient reaſon to believe that ALLEYN'S performance of SHAKESPEAR'S, and JONSON'S characters was at ſecond hand. He was, however, greatly extolled, and there can be no doubt but his merit was very conſiderable, even though it is but fair to conceive that the talents of the actor might be magnified by being ſeen through the munificence of the man*.

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* JONSON was the conſtant panegyriſt of ALLEYN; and, what is very extraordinary, we have no inſtance upon record of his having quarrelled with him. The following epigram has been frequently quoted, where BEN, however, as may be ſeen by the two laſt lines, in his diſtintereſtedneſs, ſeem to have introduced an Iriciſm. All for you and a little for myſelf honey.

If ROME ſo great, and in her wiſeſt age,
Fear'd not to boaſt the glories of her ſtage,
A ſkilful ROSCIUS and great ÆSOP, men,
Yet crown'd with honours, as with riches then,
Who had no leſs a trumpet to their name,
Than CICERO, whoſe very breath was fame:
How can ſo great example die in me,
That, ALLEYN, I ſhould pauſe to publiſh thee?

As it will ſhortly be very material to take up this ſubject again, and purſue it to the reſtoration, to which period, or very near it, moſt of the celebrated actors at the time of SHAKESPEAR lived, an account of whom will then make a very intereſting feature in the theatrical hiſtory of this country, I ſhall for the preſent drop the ſtage itſelf to examine, in a ſummary manner, the ſtate of thoſe arts which are calculated to lend it collateral aſſiſtance.

Who, both their graces, in thyſelf haſt more
Outſtrip'd, than they did all who went before:
And preſent worth, in all doſt ſo contract,
As others ſpake, but only thou doſt act;
Wear this renown: 'tis juſt that who did give
So many poets life, by one ſhould live.

CHAP. X.

CLOSE OF JAMES THE FIRST.

THOUGH the arts, from the close of HENRY the eighth's reign, had been making a progress towards perfection; though every encouragement was given to genius and talents by ELIZABETH, and to the best possible purpose and effect, as we have seen; yet when the kingdom lost her energy in ruling, many pursuits of ingenuity relaxed.

JAMES, from principle and the prejudice of education, considered his right to rule as transmitted from heaven; and, under this abuse of the idea that the king can do no wrong, which is a beautiful fact taken in its right sense, he considered himself as infallible as a Pope, and thus throughout his whole reign there were constant struggles between the priveleges of the people, and the prerogative of the king.

The Protestant religion having drawn aside that

veil of ſuperſtition in which mens minds had been entangled, and inveloped, the people began to think for themſelves; and, though they were willing to allow every honour and reſpect due to the chief magiſtrate that had by legitimate right been permitted to rule over them, yet they ſcouted the idea of his being next to a ſacred miſſionary, and heaven's vicegerent.

This was completely owing to the folly of their ruler. They never dreamt of this with ELIZABETH; their obedience to her, though inſiſted on, was neither exacted, nor enforced; it was neceſſary repreſentation on her ſide, and wholeſome compliance on the theirs. Thus her reign being conducted with equal wiſdom and reſolution, became admired and popular, and ſhe was permitted to poſſeſs prerogative to its utmoſt ſtretch, becauſe ſhe was not ſo unwiſe as to let it trench on the privcleges of the people.

In this critical juncture, when it required in a ſovereign ſtrong determination on one ſide, and ſtrict impartiality on the other, nothing could be ſo difficult as to reign in ENGLAND without great, ſtrenuous, and decided talents. Theſe JAMES unfortunately did not poſſeſs; he did not even know the character of the people whom he came to go-

vern; and, seeing this, they were determined to know themselves, and create their own resources.

This instantly cleft the kingdom in two, and privelege, and prerogative, which, like the right hand and the left were formed for the assistance of each other, became the signal of so much schism and disunion that there can be no doubt but every measure during this reign, in which was conceived the notorious gunpowder plot, in which the upright OVERBURY was poisoned, in which the gallant RALEIGH was unjustly executed, and in which the great BACON was cashiered for bribery, was some act of preparation for erecting the scaffold where the unfortunate CHARLES lost his head.

Every period, in which a kingdom is involved in disquiet and turbulence, is naturally unfavourable to the arts, and the monarch who neglects the fortunes of wise and noble counsellors, accustomed under his predecessors to deserve, by great and able conduct, the affection and countenance of their fellow subjects, will never be looked up to as the patron of the ingenious, and the enlightened.

JAMES selected his favourites from low situations. They were weak, ignorant, and illiterate, and possessed minds congenial to his own. These

men were employed to execute meaſures and conduct expeditions of which they were incapable. Such were ill calculated to encourage merit, and thus it happened that the reſt of EUROPE, in general literature, and in many of the arts infinite outſtript ENGLAND.

It cannot however be ſaid that they laid more than dormont. Study was preparing them for that celebrity which patronage was afterwards to confirm. In the mean time general poetry waited for COWLEY and MILTON, and painting for RUBENS and VANDYKE; muſic and dramatic poetry were nevertheleſs in full reputation; and this was owing to the gallantry introduced at court by the king's favourites.

The court of JAMES was full of every ſpecies of dramatic recreation; an indulgence the people were willing enough to take advantage of; who, while JONSON, invading DANIEL's province, provided thoſe ſuperficial entertainments at court under the title of Maſques, the principal merit of which was owing to the ingenuity of INIGO JONES, followed the more rational purſuits of receiving inſtruction and amuſement from the labours of SHAKESPEAR, and thoſe admirable poets whoſe merits we have already examined.

Theſe maſques, however, were particularly favourable to the cauſe of muſic, which, being thus unreſtrained received, very faſt, particular countenance and protection. The great CAMDEN, whoſe mandate the ſchools of every deſcription were glad enough to obey, had from his infancy made muſic his favourite ſtudy, for he was originally a choiriſter at Magdalen College, OXFORD.

CAMDEN, thus partial to muſic, and determined to give it every advantage in his power made a reſolution to revive a lectureſhip at OXFORD that had been founded by ALFRED. For this purpoſe he ſent a muſical friend, of the name of HEYTHER, with the deed of endowment; for which he had obtained permiſſion to doctor PIERS, who was then Vice Chancellor, and who was ſo pleaſed with the circumſtance, as well as to have an opportunity of obliging CAMDEN, that he obtained the degree of Docor in Muſic for HEYTHER; and ORLANDO GIBBONS; who were both created by that title on the eighteenth of May, 1622*.

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* The writers in general aſſert that GIBBONS never took the degree of Doctor in Muſic; but the following letter from doctor PIERS, the Vice Chancellor, to CAMDEN, will ſhew that they are completely miſtaken.

"Worthy Sir,

"The univerſity returns her humble thanks to you with this letter,

Beſides theſe advantages, which muſic boaſted from the conſequence and the merit of its profeſſors, it had every poſſible encouragement under the patronage of the great, and the protection of the king, whoſe children were all inſtructed in that art by the ableſt maſters. Prince CHARLES was a ſcholar of COPERARIO, of whom he learnt the viol da gambo*.

"We pray for your health and long life, that you may ſee the fruits "of your bounty. We have made Mr. HEYTHER a doctor in muſic; "ſo that now he is no more maſter, but Doctor HEYTHER; the like "honour for your ſake we have conferred upon Mr. ORLANDO "GIBBONS, and made him a doctor too, to accompany Dr. HEY-"THER. We have paid Mr. Dr. HEYTHER's charges for his jour-"ney, and likewiſe have given him the OXFORD courteſie, a pair of "gloves for himſelf, and another for his wife. Your honour is far "above all theſe things. And ſo deſiring the continuance of your "loving favour to the univerſity, and to me your ſervant, I take "my leave.

"OXON, 18 May, 1622. Yours ever to be commanded, "WILLIAM PIERS."

* PLAYFORD ſpeaks as follows of the muſical taſte of CHARLES. "Nor was his late ſacred majeſty and bleſſed martyr king CHARLES "the firſt, behind any of his predeceſſors in the love and promotion "of this ſcience, eſpecially in the ſervice of Almighty God, and "with much zeal he would hear reverently performed, and often "appointed the ſervice and anthems himſelf, eſpecially that ſharp "ſervice compoſed by Dr. WILLIAM CHILD, being by his know-"ledge in muſic a competent judge therein; and would play his "part exactly well on the baſs-violl, eſpecially of thoſe incomparable "fancies of Mr. COPERARIO to the organ."

Prince HENRY alſo learnt muſic, and was a warm patron of muſicians. He had fifteen muſicians on his houſehold eſtabliſhment, among whom were doctor BULL, CUTTING *, the famous luteniſt, JONES, and ANGELO.

It does not appear, however, that ſacred muſic was ſo much encouraged at that time as familiar and light airs, particularly ſuch as promoted dancing; an amuſement in which JAMES ſo delighted that he was more anxious for his children to learn it than any thing in the world. There is extant a letter to his ſons where he enjoins them to keep up their dancing, even though they ſhould be obliged to whiſtle and ſing to one another for muſic.

This taſte, however, did ſervice to the cauſe of

* A good player on the lute was at that time conſidered as a great acquiſition. The fame of CUTTING reached to the ears of CHRISTIAN the fourth, king of Denmark; who, having been forſaken by DOULAND whom he had invited to his court after hearing him in England, felt himſelf ſo diſgraced at being without a good luteniſt that he entreated lady ARABELLA STUART, in whoſe ſervice CUTTING was, before he was retained by HENRY, to ſpare him that celebrated performer. There were ſome letters, which are among the Harleian collection, that paſſed upon the occaſion; and, after a great deal of ceremony and conſultation, the lute player went to fill up this chaſm in CHRISTIAN's court. He, however, liked the ſituation no better than DOULAND had; for, in a very few years afterwards, we find him in the ſervice of Prince HENRY.

muſic, for it accuſtomed the ear to familiar melody, that required only to be methodized by LAWES and PURCELL to ſtamp it with that character which is known by the term true Engliſh muſic; a ſpecies of ſound that ſo effects the mind, and ſo appeals to the heart, that the meaneſt hearer, with feeling and ſenſibility, will be as capable of taſting its beauty and deciding upon its merit as the moſt learned critic.

By theſe means public amuſements became a matter of ſingular conſequence. The people tired of fruitleſs controverſy, were glad enough to taſte ſo rational a relaxation as the theatre afforded them; and JAMES, by ſhews and ſpectacles, hugged himſelf under an idea that he was hiding his own frivolous folly, ingratiating himſelf with his nobles, and throwing out a tub to the popular whale.

Thus animoſity and mutual recrimination were laughed off and forgotten, through the medium of a comedy or a maſque; and, while the people contented themſelves with adopting modeſt yet manly means to ſupport their own privileges, the court was ſo full of fantaſtic ſports and romantic diverſions that it at length actually became like an enchanted caſtle, whence CHARLES, as a knight, and BUCK-

INGHAM *, as his ſquire, ſallied forth to gain the affections of a Princeſs at the court of SPAIN; but CHARLES having fallen in love with the Princeſs HENRIETTA of FRANCE, whom he afterwards married, and who did ſo much injury to this country by inſtilling the principles of popery into her children, they overturned their whole ſcheme and came home in diſgrace.

In the mean time, the imbecility of the king of ENGLAND was at leaſt matched by that of the king of FRANCE. The great HENRY had ſcarcely been aſſaſſinated by RAVILIAC †—which murder, in the

* This was the famous BUCKINGHAM who was afterwards aſſaſſinated by FELTON. His conduct in Spain was ſtark madneſs; and if he had wiſhed to create the eternal enmity of that nation to his royal maſter, he could not have managed it more adroitly. Beſides adventures, intrigues, ſerenades, duels, and every other inſult likely to exaſperate ſo jealous and ſo grave a people, nothing could ſatisfy him but making open love to the ducheſs of OLIVAREZ, and affronting her huſband. The match was in conſeqnence broken off, and it was a great proof of the good ſenſe and moderation of the Spaniſh court that they required no ſerious retribution.

† The conduct of DAUBIGNY ſeems to have been very doubtful in this buſineſs; who, when confronted by RAVILIAC denied having had any converſation with him. Indeed it appears by many circumſtances, particularly the falſe and contradictory accounts the aſſaſſin gave of thoſe things that were found in his pocket, that he was a dupe to the Jeſuits, on whoſe abſolution probably he relied;

opinion of many hiſtorians, notwithſtanding he confeſſed nothing, was committed either at the inſtance of ſome of the nobles, who envied the virtues of HENRY, or by the emiſſaries of SPAIN—when the duke of SULLY reſigned, and the queen regent gave the government of the kingdom into the hands of an Italian chambermaid, whoſe huſband, CONCHINI, ſoon afterwards created Marſhal d'ANCRE, was preſently made the victim to her abſurd and unbecoming ambition; for, as ſoon as the king aſſumed the government, which he did at the age of fourteen, firſt having married ANNE of AUSTRIA, fearing that, as the power of this man had been derived from one aſſaſſination, he might wiſh to encreaſe it by another, employed VITRY, who was afterwards made Marſhal of FRANCE to diſpoſe of his enemy; he was murdered by hirelings, and his limbs given up to the fury of that populace who were but too juſtly incenſed againſt him.

In this ſtate was the court of LOUIS; a monarch,

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and, for one very ſtrong circumſtance to prove that he had accomplices, the Provoſt of PLUVIERS had openly declared, at ſix miles diſtance from PARIS, on the day the murder happened, "This day "the king will be either ſlain, or dangerouſly wounded." He was on this account ſent priſoner to PARIS; but, before he could be examined, he hanged himſelf.

timid, weak and illiterate, when CHARLES married the princeſs HENRIETTA, for though RICHLIEU, then biſhop of LUCON, had reconciled the king and his mother, and began to imagine all thoſe advantages for the kingdom which were ſo well planned and carried into execution afterwards, yet nothing but ſenſeleſs folly and fantaſtic intriguing, characterized court manners.

We have ſeen RICHELIEU a great dramatic patron, and this fancy might, perhaps, have ariſen from the neceſſity, at the time of LOUIS the thirteenth, of giving into ſome weakneſſes in order to get hold of more ſubſtantial power. Children cannot be cured entirely by ſeverity. But it is curious that he, who originally merely permitted lighter amuſements, ſhould at length grow ſo inordinately fond of them as to admire them more than any other purſuit.

It had been the faſhion to dedicate dramatic pieces; and TROTEREL, BERTRAND, FAUCONIER, De la GRANGE, and many others, inſignificant writers by the bye, had already choſen their ſeperate protectors, not forgetting BILLARD who wrote a tragedy called *Henri le Grand*, which he dedicated to the queen regent.

Thus did the two courts vie with each other in

dramatic amuſements; and this is the moment to prove, which may be done in a few words, that the celebrity of the ENGLISH ſtage, for celebrity ſurely is more legitimately due to intrinſic merit than to ſhew and ſpectacle, was as decidedly ſuperior to that of FRANCE as an animal is to a vegetable, or a piece of mechaniſm. One had paſſive life, the other active. One was wound up and ſet a going, the other went of itſelf.

A reperuſal of the fifth number of this work will confirm this fact, for we ſhall there find that, except JODELLE, GARNIER, and HARDI, the French ſtage had boaſted no name of celebrity before CORNEILLE, whoſe firſt play, *Melite*, came out in the very year in which JAMES the firſt died.

This proves that the emancipation of the Engliſh from thoſe miſts of opinion which had begun and been encouraged in the reign of ELIZABETH, and had gradually ſtrengthened and been confirmed throughout the life of JAMES, yielded moſt rationally to the beſt relaxation that could recreate the fancy, without injury to the mind; and this ſolid ſenſe, and ſound judgment, taught them to cheriſh in SHAKESPEAR the greateſt genius the world has produced; for, in the midſt of the ſquabbles and bickerings during his life, in which there is nothing

arrogant, bold, or aſpiring, he poſſeſſed that admiration he never courted, and received every teſtimony of grateful reſpect from his fellow creatures, whom he had taught and delighted. Not the leader of a party, or the minion of a court, but the advocate of virtue, and the favourite of human nature.

From all theſe premiſes I gather this concluſion. That, as the meritorious labours of the drama received very little ſupport but from the people, as the ſtage had not known the great variety of advantages introduced to it afterwards, as all the collateral arts were in a ſupine ſtate; and, in ſhort, as it was obliged to ſtand or fall by its own intrinſic and individual merit; the number of admirable tragedies and comedies that were produced at that time, for theſe are its true criterion, give dramatic fame, beyond calculation, a decided ſuperiority over every thing it ever boaſted, either before, or ſince.

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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